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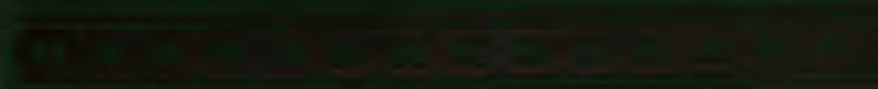
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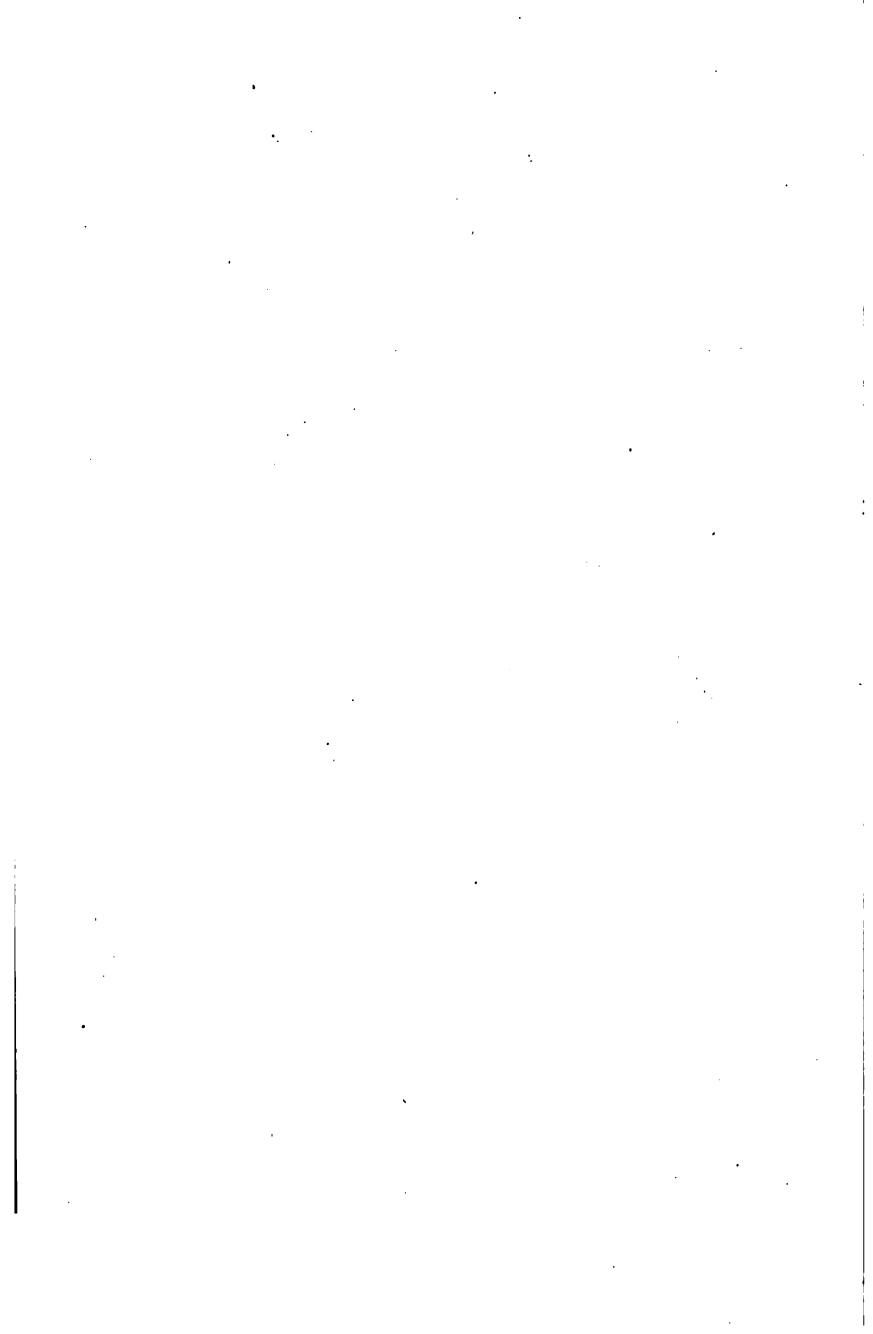


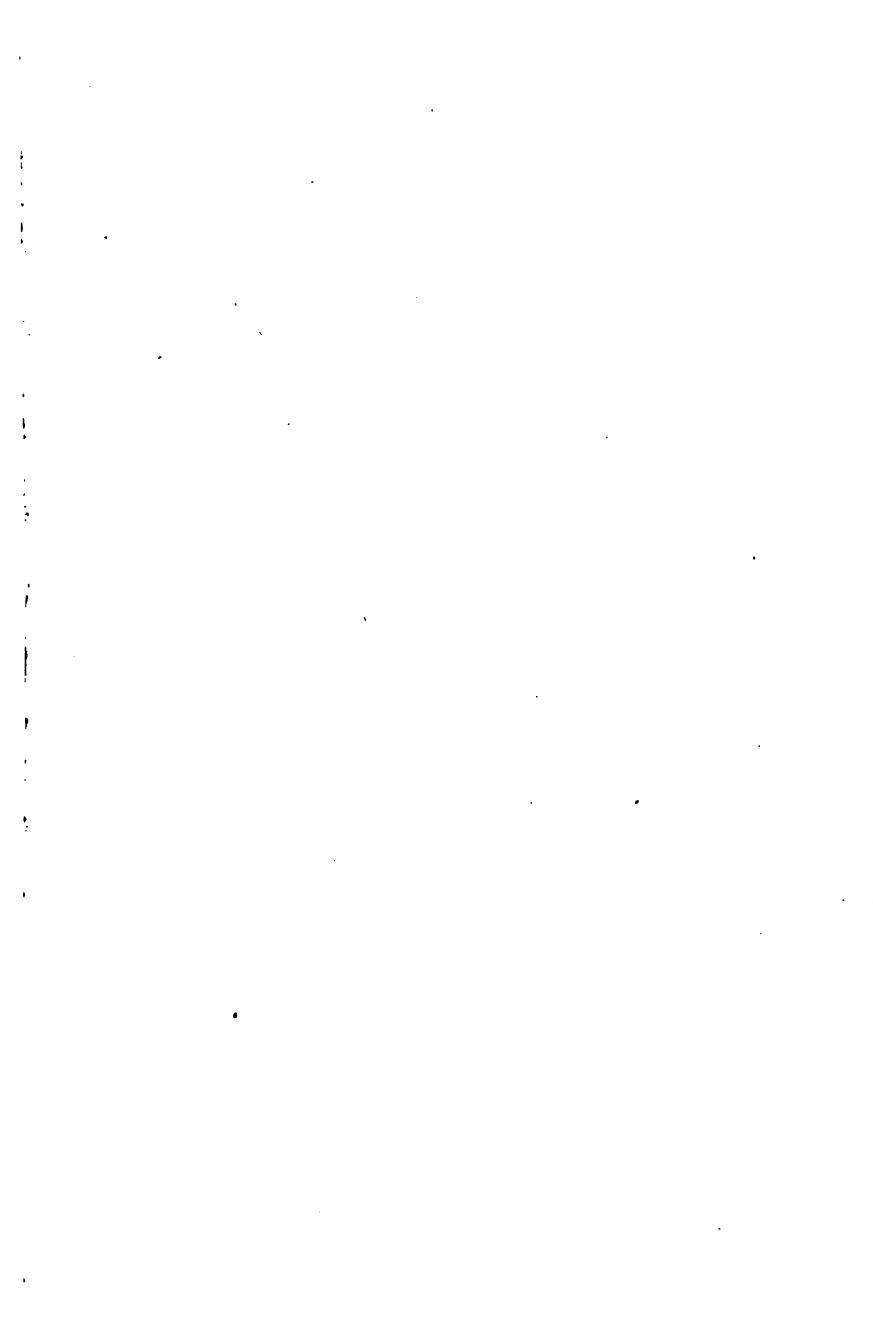
DOWN & UP AGAIN.

BY
GREGSON
GOW.











DOWN AND UP AGAIN:

BEING

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE FELTON FAMILY,
AND THE ODD PEOPLE THEY MET.

BY

GREGSON GOW,

Author of "New Light through Old Windows," "Troubles and Triumphs of
Little Tim," "Brave and True," &c.

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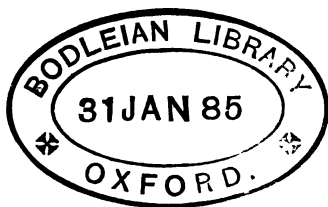


LONDON:

BLACKIE & SON, 49 & 50 OLD BAILEY, E.C.;
GLASGOW, EDINBURGH, AND DUBLIN.

1885.

2533 . e . 112.



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DOWN AND UP AGAIN.

CHAPTER I.

JOHN FELTON.

IN a certain November night, some seventeen or eighteen years ago, a mother and her three children were assembled in the usual family sitting-room. The house was in Glasgow, and consisted of an upper flat in one of the better streets on the south side of the river. Though only a flat, it was not at all a small or mean residence. Numbers of the well-to-do classes in Glasgow and other Scottish towns live in flats, reached by a stair common to two or three families. The flats may be small or large according to circumstances. In the present case the house consisted of several finely finished and commodious apartments. The parlour in which the Feltons were now sitting was a comfortable well-furnished room. The brilliant light from a pen-

dent gasalier was reflected from a large handsomely-framed mirror over the mantel; and the night being cold, a cheery fire burned in the grate, and threw a warmer glow on the faces of the small party which had gathered round it.

There was Mrs. Felton, a pleasant-faced, pleasant-voiced woman of forty-two or forty-three. One would have said she must have been very pretty when young. Her smile was very sweet; but when her features were at rest there was that something in their expression which hinted of some sorrow patiently borne. She looked fragile and delicate; yet when she opened her eyes there was a collected, steady, straight-out look in them which seemed to indicate clear-sightedness, and some firmness of character. There was Elizabeth—"Lesbie," as she was usually called—(when the boys wished to tease her they called her "Betty," and sometimes "Queen Bess"), a pretty girl of seventeen, very like her mother, but with more colour in her face. These two were sitting on one side of the hearth sewing, and talking in a low tone, not to disturb the boys at the other side, who were both busy preparing lessons for next day's school. Edward was fourteen, and Johnny was eight. There were only the three children now. There had been others,

but they had passed away when babies, and were now only sad, solemn, yet not unpleasant memories in a mother's heart.

"Don't you think, mama," Leslie was saying, "that I have had enough of one kind of thing and another, now?"

Mrs. Felton looked up fondly, but a little anxiously, at the girl.

"You mean education?" she said.

"Yes; when is it to be done? I have more than I can find any use for."

"You must try to put it to some use."

"Well, but I mean useful use. You are often straitened for money, mama. I found that out some time ago—"

"Well—no—" said Mrs. Felton, sighing slightly. "We always get what we need, Leslie."

"At all events, I am not learning anything which will enable me to help you that way."

"Leslie, your father would not permit it. He says always that since we have only one girl we can afford to keep her at home. He means you always to be at home—he has brought you up as a young lady; though I sometimes think, considering the precariousness of our income, it would have been better—but there—never mind; your father—hush! is that him?" and an anxious look

started into her eyes. "No, it is some one for the house below."

"Well, and if I am only to help you at home, I've surely had enough of music, French, drawing, and such like? There has been enough spent—"

"Hillo! Betty!" cried Edward, "you are getting rather loud. How's a fellow to get out the fifth of a ninth of seven-eighths of goodness knows what else if you chatter like a magpie?"

"Put cotton in your ears, Ned."

"I'll rather slap yours, Betty. You're precious well off with no lessons to do."

"Haven't I?"

"Drawing and playing tunes is just amusement; not like this at all. And I've got Morell yet, with his subject and object, and clauses of one kind and another. Tries a fellow's brains, I can tell you."

"I've been through all that, too, Ned."

"Yes; but you hadn't a big sister to chatter at your ear."

"I had worse; I had two stirring boys making a racket around me."

"Now, now," said the mother; "let us have quiet. Hurry on, boys, and be done before papa comes in!"

Lesbie cast a good-humoured smile at Ned and

said no more—though indulging sometimes in a slight bicker, they were the best of friends—and Ned attacked his problem with determination. Johnny, who had been writing out an exercise, shut his books, saying he was done, and turning towards the fire, sat with his hands in his pockets, and amused himself fingering over the various treasures stored therein.

There was silence for some time, when Mrs. Felton again said "Hush!" and sat in a listening attitude, her needle suspended in mid-air. There was the sound of steps on the lower stair. Then all at once there was a dull thud; and was not that a groan which followed?

The mother started to her feet and stood trembling, unable to speak or move. Then there was the sound of doors opening on the stair beneath, of people running down the lower stair, and of confused voices.

"Edward!" was all she could say; but before the word was well spoken the elder boy had the door open. There were two stairs between the Feltons' and the stone-paved entrance level with the street, both rather steep. Edward was at the foot in a moment, and what he saw was a small group of men and women bending over a man who was lying on his back with his feet touching

the second step. The stair was well lighted, and the first glance was enough to tell the boy that it was his father who was lying there.

"It's papa!" he cried, and was down on his knees trying to lift the head which lay on the hard stone. He gave a cry, for his hand had touched a wound from which the warm blood was oozing.

"He's had a fall backwards," said one of the neighbours.

"And from nigh the top," said another.

"He fell heavily," said a woman; "I almost thought I felt the floor shake."

Here a pale figure appeared on the steps with wide staring eyes. It was Mrs. Felton. When she saw the prostrate form she rushed forward with a scream. One of the women took her by the hand.

"He's had a bad fall, Mrs. Felton!" she said.

"O, John! John!" moaned the poor woman, as she knelt down beside her husband and attempted to raise him.

"We must get him taken up, Mrs. Felton," said one of the men softly. "If you will go first, we'll carry him up—very carefully; and the boy had better run for a doctor."

"Shall I, mother?"

She nodded, and Edward was off like an arrow from a bow. He knew where to go. Dr. Murray, the family doctor, lived only two streets off. Edward fortunately found him within, just thinking of an early bed—he had been up most of the previous night; but the good doctor exchanged his slippers for his boots, and his dressing-gown for his overcoat, and obeyed the call at once.

When Edward got back with the doctor John Felton had been carried upstairs and laid on his own bed. Mrs. Felton, assisted by the weeping Leslie and one of the neighbours, was feebly endeavouring to wash the wounded head, still moaning as she did so, "O, John! John!" When she saw the doctor she desisted, and sinking into a chair, cried, "O, doctor, I think he is dead!"

"Let me see," he said calmly.

He asked a few questions; but his experienced hand and eye soon told him the truth.

"Mrs. Felton," he said, turning from the bed, "I am sorry to say you are right. I can do nothing for him—he is gone!"

Mrs. Felton sat transfixed, unable to speak. Leslie sobbed; Edward burst into tears and flung himself down beside his mother; and little Johnny, who had been standing at the door, came running

in and added his voice to the sound of wailing with which the room was filled without knowing very clearly what was wrong.

We need not attempt to describe the misery of that night when the Feltons were left alone with their dead, and the older members of the family began to realize their loss.

John Felton was a commercial traveller, who had gradually risen to a position of importance in a large city firm. He had been very successful, having a free, taking style of address, and his services being valuable, were highly remunerated. For some time, between salary and commission, he had enjoyed a very large income indeed. Unfortunately, he had acquired expensive habits of living, and spent his money as he got it in personal indulgences, furnishing a large house, educating his children, and living, generally, in what is called a "genteel" style. One thing must be said of him, that if he was liberal and indulgent to himself he was the same to his family. He was a kind husband and father, and was dearly loved by his wife and children. His two great faults were improvidence and occasional intemperance. His habits when from home his wife knew little about; but when in the city, there were latterly few nights on which he did

not come home less or more under the influence of drink. This latter vice it was which had wrung his wife's heart, paled her cheek, and shadowed her brow. This it was which made her await his home-coming with anxiety, and listen for his step on the stair with a beating heart. She had actually foreboded something like what had now occurred, for she knew that the stairs were steep, and his footing too often unsure. She looked back with a sad heart on the time when his coming was the occasion of nothing but gladness, and had still hoped against hope that such a time might come again. Alas for the end of it! A sudden and a violent death to himself, and to his wife and family an untimely bereavement, which meant much more than the acute sorrow of the moment—which meant a sudden descent from a condition of comfort and plenty to one of struggling poverty.

Mrs. Felton had striven to hide her husband's weakness from the children. Often he would be met by her in the hall, and led by her in sorrow and silence into his bed-room, when he chanced to return before the young ones had retired; and he had always submitted quietly and in good-humour; for drink did not make him ill-natured or quarrelsome, and he knew the motive, and,

even when only half-conscious, seemed to respect it.


Poor John Felton! a clever, genial, kind-hearted, well-conditioned man in many respects; he was loved by his family and liked by all who came into contact with him; but "the little rift within the lute" had gradually widened, and at last had "silenced all."





CHAPTER II.

DOWN.

T was not till the funeral was over that Mrs. Felton began to realize the position in which her husband's sudden death had left her.

As we have said, John Felton's money had been spent as it had been earned. They were free from debt—the wife had been resolute on that point—but there was not a single pound in the savings' bank. There was, however, one circumstance to be thankful for; John's one prudential act had been to insure his life for a thousand pounds. When the insurance had been effected he was not old, so that the yearly payments had been moderate, and Mrs. Felton had taken care to have them always ready. This was at least something. The widow found herself with a good stock of furniture, and the prospect of a thousand pounds in money, but with four people to maintain or in some way provide for. Not one of them had hitherto brought in a single

penny, and they had been accustomed to live after a rather expensive fashion. That state of things would have to come to an end. Leslie must give up her fancy lessons and turn her hand to something useful; Edward would have to be taken from school and put to some sort of work so as to bring in a little money; Johnny—Johnny it would be necessary to keep at school, somehow, for years to come; while she herself would perhaps be obliged to find some work, for the interest of even a thousand pounds, though it would be a great help, would not go so very far

Two or three days after the funeral they were all together in the parlour, looking sad and strange to each other in their mournings. The servant had just cleared away the tea-things, and they turned towards the fire, at which all four looked for some time without speaking. At length the mother, who looked more thin and pale, but as calm and resolute as ever, said:

"I suppose I will have to give Jane notice; we must do without her, Leslie."

"Of course, mama; I shall be glad to do all the work."

"I shall assist you, my dear."

"Not a bit, mama—I am quite able for it. I will have nothing else to do."

"I am—not—quite—so sure of that, my dear."

Lesbie looked at her mother inquiringly. The true state of affairs had not yet been fully realized by her. She had been so absorbed by grief, and the duties it fell to her to discharge, that she had not even thought of it

"We shall require some money, you know," said Mrs. Felton still hesitatingly.

"Is there—no money?"

Mrs. Felton shook her head; "Very little," she said—"not so much as would pay the rent."

Edward and Johnny both looked interested. Edward had the dark hair and eyes of his father, and was a smart intelligent boy; Johnny had the round face and fair complexion of his mother.

"Indeed," continued Mrs. Felton, "we will have to leave this house at mid-term—which is just here—and go to a cheaper one; we could not afford the rent."

They all looked grave at this.

"Will I have to go to work too?" asked Edward eagerly.

"I am afraid of it," said his mother sadly.

"That's jolly—I'm very glad."

"I am sorry, then. You should have two or three more years at school."

"Have had quite enough of it, I think."

"No; you are not yet fit for a good situation, and you are hardly strong enough for work."

"Ain't I? Try me. School is hard work, I can tell you. What kind of work will it be, mama?"

"I really do not know. I must speak to the MacQuarries" (the firm with which John Felton had been connected). "Yes, I am afraid we shall all have to try and earn something."

"Me too, mama?" asked little Johnny.

The mother's face relaxed into a smile.

"No, my little son; you are only a baby yet. We must manage to keep you at school—some cheaper school—till you are at least as old as Ned is."

"I am not a baby," remonstrated Johnny.

"I feel something like Ned," said Leslie; "I shall be glad to have some change from continual lesson-learning and practising. If I had only been able to make dresses."

"Perhaps the MacQuarries will be able to get some sewing for us. I must call at the insurance office to-morrow, and see after some work at once, for I have really no money left; and—we are—owing something."

What a horrible feeling is the consciousness of debt to one unaccustomed to it! Mrs. Felton, as

we have said, had up till now managed to keep free of it; but this catastrophe had caught her unprepared, and she had been obliged to relax her rule.

Taking Edward along with her Mrs. Felton called next day, as she had proposed, at the establishment of MacQuarrie Brothers. She would fain have remained indoors some days longer, but necessity urged.

She was received kindly by one of the partners. He seemed surprised when she made her request that he should procure some light work from some of the manufacturing houses for herself and her daughter, but promised to do his best.

"The boy is too small for us yet," he said when she mentioned Edward. "Keep him at school for a year or two, and we shall see what we can do then."

Mrs. Felton sighed, thanked him for his kindness, and took her leave.

"I do not see how they can be so ill off," said Mr. MacQuarrie to his brother when mentioning the fact that the widow had called. "Felton must have saved a lot of money. Look at what we have been paying him one way and another for many years back."

"I fancy they lived high."

"I don't know, I'm sure; but if they are not provided for they ought to be." With which remark he seemed to shake all responsibility as to the Felton family from the shoulders of the firm.

Mrs. Felton next presented the necessary papers at the insurance office in St. Vincent Street, expecting, perhaps, to come away with the money in her hand.

"Will look into it and communicate," was the announcement of the gentlemanly official.

She looked wistfully in his face, but perceiving the reasonableness of the delay, she came quietly away.

Ten days had elapsed, and Mrs. Felton was still anxiously waiting to hear something about her thousand pounds. Many had been her calculations as to how far it would go to meet the wants of the family. If invested in some safe way how much would it yield in a year? and how much would that come to per week? Or should she just put it into some bank, so that she might get it to use as need arose? She had no one to advise with. She and her husband came originally from a remote country town, and had none but distant relatives alive. In Glasgow they had made some acquaintances, but had no

intimate friend. She felt herself lonely in spite of Leslie and the boys.

Once she had this money she thought she would be able to carry out some of her plans, but till then she felt as if she were unable to move. Every day her debts were increasing, and her little stock of ready money was nearly exhausted. Jane, the servant, was looking out for another situation, having agreed to leave as soon as she found one—and, at all events, in two weeks.

It is post time, and hark! that is the postman on the stair. A ring at the door-bell tells that he has something for them, and Mrs. Felton's heart gives a bound of expectation. The boys are at school, the quarter not being quite out, so that she has only Leslie with her. Jane brings in a big business-like letter. Mrs. Felton opens the missive with a trembling hand.

As she read Leslie saw that she turned first red and then white. The hand which held the letter dropped, and the poor woman fell back in her chair as if some one had struck her. Leslie started up in alarm, crying:

"What is it, mama? are you ill?"

"Water!" gasped Mrs. Felton.

In a moment Leslie had her arm round her

mother's neck and a glass of water at her lips. After taking a mouthful Mrs. Felton sat up.

"It was the shock," she said. "This letter—read it."

Lesbie found that it was a letter from the insurance company to the effect that, having made inquiries, and finding that John Felton had contributed to his own death, they had decided to resist the claim for payment of the £1000 for which his life had been insured.

"What do they mean?" asked Lesbie; "how did papa—" and there she stopped, for the meaning had already flashed upon her.

The woman and the girl gazed at each other with white lips.

"Can they keep the money from us, mama?"

"I don't know—I suppose they can. But somehow I had not thought of it—the accident—in that way, and it was a—a shock."

"What shall you do?"

"I do not know—I'll speak to Dr. Murray—but no, he will have been consulted by the insurance company; but there come the boys—say nothing about it. I shall take a night to think about it."

Next morning when the boys had been got off to school Lesbie returned to the subject.

"What are you going to do about the money, mama?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing! Do not people go to law about such things?"

"Yes—but I shall not. There was that case we were reading about in the newspapers not long ago—the provost of Kenmuir—a company refused to pay the insurance because he had been taking drink freely—the heirs went to law, and the poor dead man's failings were exposed in the courts, and all his weakness made public—and the money was not got after all. I would rather lose the money twice over than have all about your father told in open court for the public to gape about." And Mrs. Felton looked as if she meant what she said. "Think what you would feel—think of the boys. No, let John rest in peace. I shall say no more about it."

Lesbie felt as if her mother were right; at least her own heart beat in sympathy with the decision.

"Let me go to-day," she said, "and see if Mr. MacQuarrie has heard of any work for us."

Yes, for this made a great and grievous difference in their position. In any case a struggle was before them, but it would now be a struggle begun with an empty hand, a struggle of the

hardest kind. Some change would have to be made without delay.

"No," said Mrs. Felton in reply to Leslie's suggestion; "we'll have enough to do for some days. What I have resolved on is to leave this house and go to a smaller one at once. There will be a good deal of furniture to sell, which will bring as much money as pay what we owe, and start us in a humble way."

Leslie's face fell. Though she had known that the change was inevitable, when looked at near it seemed very dreadful.

"Where shall we go, mama?"

"As far from this neighbourhood as possible. It would make the change doubly bitter if we remained amongst people who knew us. Make yourself ready and we can go just now and have a look. I think we might find a suitable place in the northern district."

"Have we no friends who could help us?" asked Leslie wistfully.

"We have no relatives here, and none anywhere to whom I could apply. Everyone has enough to do with himself, Leslie. I have," after a pause, "a—cousin, somewhere in the city. I believe he is in business, and may be well off, but I have lost sight of him for many years, and

—and I could on no account speak to him at all events.”

“Why, mama?”

Mrs. Felton’s pale face flushed a little as she said, “Well—I offended him deeply once.”

Mrs. Felton put her plans into execution without delay. In a very short time, just as the boys’ school term came to an end, and Mr. Mac-Quarrie had succeeded in obtaining some white sewing for herself and her daughter, the family found themselves settled in a small house in Talbot Street, in the northern quarter of the city.





CHAPTER III.

JACOB TAPP.

THE street in which the Feltons were now domiciled was one inhabited chiefly by the working-classes. It was narrow and dull, but quiet and respectable. The house was on the second floor, and consisted of two small rooms and a kitchen. It was a narrow tenement of four flats, with two tenants in each flat, a three-apartment house on one side of the stair, and a two-apartment house on the other. The two-apartment house on the same landing with the Feltons seemed to be occupied by a mechanic, his wife, and two children; what sort of people were in the other houses Mrs. Felton did not yet know, but she had been told they were all well-doing, quiet-living people.

It was a great change to the Feltons, and at first they felt as if they could hardly breathe in the small, rather dingy rooms; but after they had got all things nicely arranged and were

assembled at night round the kitchen fire, with the gas burning above the mantel, they decided that their new home might be both comfortable and cheery. It was at least the best they could afford, and the widow knew it would be a hard fight to keep even so humble a roof above their heads.

Mrs. Felton and Leslie were busy at their needle-work—preparing men's shirts for the sewing-machines (just newly come into general use), which not only their own need, but the rules of the manufacturer, required to be done without delay. Johnny was sitting on a stool looking over one of his illustrated school books, but Edward was absent from the circle.

"It is nicer at night," said Leslie; "I wish it were all night together."

"Any place in the city is dull in mid-winter," said her mother; "wait till summer and you will be astonished how bright things will look. We can see a narrow strip of green and a small tree at the far end of it from our bed-room window. But what can be keeping Ned out so late?"

"The long December nights make it look later than it is," said Leslie. "It is only seven."

"I don't like them out much after dark. There he is," as a knock came to the door. "Let Ned

in, Johnny." Johnny rose dreamily, with his eyes still fixed on the book, and did as he was bid.

Edward came in with a clatter, saying:

"There is a place where they want a boy, mama, and I went in and he said I might do, but I was to bring my mother."

"A place! What sort of a place?"

"They sell books. I saw a ticket in the window, 'Boy Wanted.'"

"Oh, I see! Where is it?"

"Not far away. In a sort of square off the busy street down there—I don't know what they call it."

"Sit down," said Leslie, "and tell your story decently, and do not stand shouting."

Edward made his sister a bow. "Your majesty shall be obeyed," he said, and sitting down told how he had observed the shop when passing along the street, had gone over to look at the books, noticed the card, and thinking he would like to sell books, had boldly stepped in and asked if he would do.

"He's a queer little man," continued Ned; "old, bald, wrinkled brow, long sharp nose, voice just like a crow's; but he says it's five shillings a week, and Charlie Brown, who went into Stewart &

MacDonald's last summer, and is two years older than I am, you know, mama, only gets ten pounds a year, which is just three shillings and tenpence two-thirteenths a week."

"You have got it very exact, Ned," said Leslie.

"Well, I figured it out when mama was saying we would only have what we could earn to live upon. I knew how much Charlie had."

"He said I was not very strong," continued Ned, "but I heard him saying he liked my look. I thought he was speaking to somebody, but I could not see anyone. And then he asked me who I was, and where I came from."

"And what did you say?"

"I just told him."

"And he said you were to bring me?"

"Yes, to-morrow."

"He'll not be a nice master," said Johnny, who had been listening with both ears.

"He does not look very nice as you describe him, Ned," said Leslie.

"He'll not eat me," said Ned; "and five shillings is a lot of money; and I'm not going back to school again; and I'm not big enough for anything else; and I want to help mother; and I would like to sell books; and won't you go, mama?"

Such an accumulation of reasons seemed quite enough to carry the point.

"We'll think of it," said his mother. "If the place is respectable it might do till you grow a bit, and are a little cleverer with pen and pencil—for you must go to evening school, Ned—or at least till something better turns up."

"I don't think we'll grow rich off this sewing anyway, mama," said Leslie with a sigh.

"No, it seems wretchedly paid. But as my mother used to say, 'We must set a stout heart to a steep braid.' We have fallen low, and have difficulties before us, but if we keep our health and do right, with God's blessing, we shall rise again. This place that Edward has discovered, with its five shillings a week, is perhaps the first step of the ladder by which he at least is to mount."

"If I get up I'll take you all with me," said Ned.

His mother smiled on him, but she did not know how deep an impression her remarks had made on the boy, and how firmly he resolved in his own mind, that if they did not get up again it would not be his fault.

"But, Ned," said Mrs. Felton, afraid of the effect of her own words, "money, and getting up

in the world are not everything,—are not the chief things. If we be good and do our duty we may be happy in a very humble lot.”

“When shall I be big enough to work, mama?” asked little Johnny, not willing to be quite lost sight of.

“What should you like to do, my dear?”

“Drive a ’bus,” said Johnny without a moment’s hesitation, at which they all laughed.

“In the meantime you’ll go to school, mind your lessons, and become clever. I have been making inquiries, and I think the Normal School,—not far from this—will be the most suitable for the present. The fees are low, and I understand a good, plain education is given. I’ll take you there and see about it to-morrow.”

“Are you not going with me to-morrow, mama?” asked Edward.

“Well, I might do both errands at once, which will save time. And now, boys, run away to bed, and remember to say your prayers. Leslie,” when the boys were gone, “I suppose we must finish this parcel of work before we sleep, and I can take it to the warehouse when I go out to-morrow.”

Unaccustomed to close work, the mother and daughter felt both very tired before they had

finished, and this night they realized for the first time what it was to toil for mere bread.

Next morning after a frugal breakfast—for Mrs. Felton knew that the small sum of money left over from the sale of her superfluous furniture would have to be carefully husbanded—the mother and the two boys went out, leaving Leslie to arrange the house, a task which she much preferred to sewing white seam.

"Here we are, mama," said Edward when they came to Stebbing's Place, a little square recess off Dinwuddie Street, which was built up some years ago. "That's it," pointing to a shop in the further side facing the street. The name above the door was "Jacob Tapp;" and on the wall between the door and window—there was only the one window—was the intimation in two lines:—

"Books new and old
Bought and sold."

And in the window was seen a large placard on which was neatly printed in black letters, and also in two lines:

"Bookbinding done cheap
In cloth or calf or sheep."

Mrs. Felton smiled as she read the doggerel lines, and when she stepped into the shop and looked

at the hard-faced old man behind the counter, she thought he did not seem like one who would amuse himself with making rhymes.

"Mr. Tapp?" she said.

"At your service," was the reply in a sharp and harsh voice, not unlike that of a rook, as Ned had said. He was a thin pale man; the front of his head was bald, but some tufts of gray hair lay long and thick down the back of his neck; his eyes were small, round, and black; his nose was long and pointed, and he had a way of perking forward his head when he spoke, acquired, perhaps, from talking across the rather broad counter; so that altogether he looked as well as spoke not unlike an old white-headed crow.

"I have called about the boy's place," said Mrs. Felton, bringing Ned forward.

"Oh—ah—yes—mother?"

"Yes."

"She seems a respectable woman," said Mr. Tapp, in a rather lower creak, but still quite audibly, and looking straight in Mrs. Felton's face, "think I might risk him. Is he honest?" he asked more loudly, adding in the lower tone, "looks like it, but like is an ill mark."

"I think you will find him so," said Mrs. Felton.

"Widow woman—seen better days," half croaked, half snarled, Mr. Tapp, still looking straight in her face. "Oh—ah—yes—send him in to-morrow."

"Are you all alone in the shop, Mr. Tapp—I mean, will he have no other person beside him? I am anxious, you know, as to what companions so young a boy might be brought into contact with."

"No one else," said Mr. Tapp. "Learn no bad habits here—mind his work—and be honest—and tell no lies."

"I think I can pass my word for him in these respects."

"Mothers think them angels of goodness," creaked Mr. Tapp in the lower tone in which Mrs. Felton now began to understand he spoke "to himself," without intending his remarks to be heard, nor apparently suspecting that they were so; "oftener imps of mischief."

"And what are the hours?"

"Nine till seven. Early—but what's the use of later when no sales?"

"And he'll get home to dinner?"

"One till two—five shillings on Saturday night. Say settled. Woman—palaver—no time to waste," the latter remark in his lower tone.

"And your trade is entirely in books?"

"'Books new and old bought and sold,' 'Book-binding done cheap in cloth or calf or sheep,'" quoted Mr. Tapp, and catching Mrs. Felton smiling, said: "Don't think the rhymes mine—no such nonsense—Didn't notice at first what beautiful poetry they make—haven't had time to change them. Wish she would go away" in his under-note, "and not stand there all day. Good-day, ma'am"—louder—"to-morrow at nine."

"Very well, Mr. Tapp. I'll let him try it, and I hope he will please you," said Mrs. Felton as he turned his back upon her. "Good-day."

"He is an odd sort of man, Ned," said Mrs. Felton, when they had got out to the street.

"Isn't he? a regular queer one. I could hardly keep from laughing at him," said Ned. "What queer things he said to you."

"I fancy he doesn't know he is speaking aloud sometimes, when he is. You must take care and not laugh at him, Ned. He is an old, and apparently a respectable enough man, and has a well-filled shop; and that was a well-dressed person who went in as we left—one of his customers probably. You must be respectful and obedient to him, attend to what he tells you, and learn as much as you can about the business."

Edward promised to do his best.

"I didn't see any picture-books," said Johnny.

"No; I do not think that is the sort of thing Mr. Tapp deals in."

"I hope he has some story-books," said Ned.
"I shall have lots of time to read, likely."

"I am not so sure of that," said his mother.
"You will have a good deal to learn before you are of much use. But here we are at the school. Wait outside, Ned, to take Johnny home."

After Mrs. Felton had arranged with the rector what department of the school Johnny was to enter, the two boys went home, and she proceeded alone down to Virginia Street in the city, where the warehouse was from which she had, on Mr. MacQuarrie's recommendation, got the white sewing to do.

She found several women waiting at the door, and had to stand till they were served. They seemed decent enough persons, but not of the class amongst which she had hitherto lived. Some of them were poorly clad, and others coarse-looking, and she involuntarily shrank from contact with them. This waiting at the work-room door she found very wearying and humiliating; but she silently took herself to task, asking herself what better she was than the thousands who had

to do the same, and telling herself there was nothing really humiliating in working for her daily bread.

By the time she got in to the work-table she was very tired, and the girl who took her work found some little fault with it, speaking rather sharply, and, as Mrs. Felton thought, very uncourtously. The tears started to her eyes, but she said nothing. The girl, probably, did not mean to be unkind, but she had to see that the work was done properly, and had perhaps discovered that if she did not speak sharply she would often be imposed upon.

Another bundle of work was made up and handed to Mrs. Felton, with the remark that it must be "better done and up to time." The poor woman took it up meekly, saying only "Thank you, miss," and went down to the street with a sore and heavy heart. She forced herself to walk all the way to Talbot Street; she could not afford to take the 'bus,—and she arrived home quite exhausted.



CHAPTER IV.

"LAL."

HEDWARD was in Stebbing's Place sharp at nine next morning, but the shutters of the shop were already down, and Mr. Tapp behind the counter.

"Well!" creaked the old man, fixing his beady eyes on Ned, and perking forward his head.

"Ah—oh—yes. Boy is punctual—good sign," the latter remark in his undertone; and he motioned to Ned to come inside.

"Good writer?"

"Yes," said Ned confidently.

"Good arithmetician?"

"Ye—yes," not quite so confidently.

"Take the dust off the books," putting a feather brush into Ned's hand.

Ned worked away at the dusting for what he thought a long time. Meanwhile one man came in, put on a pair of spectacles, looked round among the books, and went out again, without

saying a word to Mr. Tapp or Mr. Tapp to him ; and another came in, asked for a book, got it, and paid for it.

"Here, now, boy. What's your name—eh?" said old Mr. Tapp at length.

"Edward, or Ned."

"Ned—ay, we'll say Ned—nice short name," (in the undertone). "Learn this by heart;" and he gave Ned a table of his "private mark," in which certain letters represented certain numbers.

"When I call out the letter you be able to call out the number—when I call out the number you name the letter."

In about an hour Ned was examined on the table and came out respectably. Mr. Tapp then showed him that inside the cover of every book the price was marked in letters instead of figures.

"Now, what is the price of this little book?"

Ned looked at the mark and said "ninepence."

"Right! And this bigger one?"

"A six, and another six with a stroke between."

"Well, what would that mean if in figures?"

Ned thought a little. "Is it six shillings and sixpence, sir?"

"That boy has some manners," in the under-

tone, and then louder, "Yes, of course. Now, you can tell the price of any book when asked. Now, do some more dusting, and say the table over to yourself while about it."

More customers came in, and Ned observed that a good many of them looked about without speaking and went away without purchasing.

The next task set to Ned was to learn the names of all the books on a particular shelf, which shelf had a number at the end. By the time he was able to repeat them over rather imperfectly, it was one o'clock.

"Go to dinner, and be back sharp," said Mr. Tapp. "You don't think I can do without food either, do you?" adding in his undertone, "What does the young rascal care about that?"

When Ned came back he was set to learn another shelf, and the old man went up a sort of ladder-stair, saying as he disappeared, "You can pull that if you want me," pointing to a rope with a wooden knob at the end of it, which came down from the ceiling. There was no need to pull the rope, as no one chanced to come in while Ned was alone, which was only for a short time. Mr. Tapp did not seem to be long about his dinner.

When Mr. Tapp came down the ladder again,

he showed Ned a book in which he was to enter everything sold, and also the money received. Also another large book which Mr. Tapp called the "Catalogue," where all the books in the shop, "or most of them," said Mr. Tapp, were entered alphabetically. Into this book was entered every new volume that came into the shop, "or should be," said Mr. Tapp, and marked out when sold. There were some new books lying on the table, and Ned was shown how to catalogue them, and where to put them past.

"When a book is asked for," said Mr. Tapp, "and you don't know whether we have it, turn up catalogue—will likely find it there, with number of shelf. Better have it on memory—must look sharp and learn. Boys," he added *sotto voce*, "take so long to learn, bother 'em."

By seven o'clock Ned was tired enough, and was not so sure that he would have much time to read story-books or anything else.

When the family were all gathered round the fire at night Edward gave a history of his first day's work; and Johnny, who had been at his new school, had something to tell too. Mrs. Felton had recovered from her fatigue, and Leslie was in high spirits after what she considered a successful day's housekeeping; and as the two

women sat and sewed and the boys chatted, a sort of feeling of home happiness came over them, and Leslie actually began to trill a simple song. Leslie was a "singing bird." Some people are singing birds, and some are not. Some go about their work cheerily and happily enough, perhaps, but silently; others break out involuntarily into snatches of song. They may be no cheerier or happier than the others, but they seem so, and make those around them cheerier. Mrs. Felton had been a "singing bird," and Leslie inherited the instinct. But on this night when she looked at her mother bending over her seam, and remembered all their recent losses and sorrows, the warble gradually sank lower and died away.

"You will miss your piano, Leslie," said her mother.

"O yes, a little, I daresay; but not much. I will be too busy," said Leslie blithely.

"I like better to hear her singing without the piano," said Ned.

Next forenoon Mr. Tapp told Ned he was going to a sale, but would not be long out.

"Keep your eyes open and your head straight, now," he said as he went out, adding in his sup-

posed inaudible tone, "likely make some blunder—looks alive, though."

Mr. Tapp had not well shut the door when Ned, hearing a slight noise on the trap-ladder, or stair, by which his master had ascended to dinner on the previous day, looked up. The top of the ladder disappeared amid the shadows cast by some projecting book-shelves, and just where light and shadow blended Ned saw a long white face looking down at him.

"Has he gone out?" asked the face.

"Who?" said Ned, a little startled.

"Blue-beard, Ali Baba, Fee-fo-fum, the Ogre, Old Crow."

"Who?" asked Ned again.

"The old man—is he out?"

"Mr. Tapp has gone out."

A pair of long legs clad in tattered trousers too short for them, now made their appearance on the upper steps, and soon the entire figure of a long, lank lad, whose age it was impossible to guess from his appearance within a number of years—he might be younger or older—stood at the foot turning a pair of large, light-blue, serious eyes on Ned. The figure then sat down on the lowest step, and resting its hands on its knees, said in a rapid sing-song:

"Jingling jingling Jim,
Tingling tingling Tim,
Put off the pan, put on the pot,
Stir 'em well, and take 'em hot."

"What do you say?" said Ned.

"Never mind—it don't mean anything. Are you the new one?"

"Yes," said Ned at a venture.

"Can you do it?"

"Do what?"

"Make the books come along right—find 'em when you want 'em and put 'em down square?"

"I am going to learn."

"I couldn't—he tried me at it—Old Crow did—"

"But who is Old Crow?"

"Him—that's what they call him—"

Jingling jingling Jim,
Tingling tingling Tim,
Put off the pot—no—the pan—

Mother washes for him, and got him to try me. Couldn't do it—so he put me up there—Jingling, jingling," and he shut his mouth with a snap.

"Why couldn't you?"

"Why, bless you, I'm a little uncommon here," putting his finger on his brow; "what do you say to that? Can do some things—Jingling

jingling Jim—but some things I can't. Can make poems, now, what do you say to that? They make 'emself in my head, and keep saying 'emself in my head, and then I can't help saying 'em out aloud! What do you say to that?"

"Is that one of your poems?"

"What?"

"'Jingling jingling,' and something else?"

"That's just what it is. It made itself some days since, and I'm always hearing it and saying it when I want to say something else. It will run out and then something else will make itself."

"That's strange."

"Is it now?—I suppose it is. Or, if I can get 'em printed—can print—that's another thing I can do; but never could get past round hand in writing—what do you say to that?—Jingling jingling Jim, Tingling tingling Tim, Put off the pan, put on the pot, Stir 'em well and take 'em hot—Always brought the wrong book—and when Old Crow asked me something, or the gentlemen who came in, the last poem my head had made *would* shove itself in."

"That was a pity."

"Ah—so said Old Crow. Jingling jingling—hup—'Lal Flannagan,' that's me. 'Lal Flanna-

gan,' he said, 'you're no good here—try it above,' and he sent me up. What do you say to that?"

"What do you do up there?"

"Keep his house and make his meat. He had a woman, but mother says she played the mischief. She was no good up there, and I was no good down here, and so—Jingling jingling Jim—he put her out, and put me up.—Put off the pan put on the pot, stir 'em well and take 'em hot."

"But what is it," asked Ned, who was feeling both confused and amused, "what is it that's to be stirred well and taken hot?"

"Eh? I could not just say; but"—putting a hand on each side of his mouth and whispering—"I think it's porridge. I make 'em every morning before I boil the kettle. What do you say to that?"

"I think if it was porridge there would be something about the milk."

"Do you now? But why should there when there's no milk? Eh? What do you say to that?"

"Is there no milk?"

"'Lal Flannagan,' said Old Crow to me, 'if you can't take well-stirred porridge without milk

it's time you was learning.'—Stir 'em well and take 'em hot.—He takes 'em without milk himself. He don't eat much—sometimes takes a nap instead of his dinner."

"You should not call him Old Crow; he would not like it."

"Wouldn't he now? But when he never hears me—what do you say to that? And what business has he to be so like a crow?—what do you say to that?"

"It's all the same, you should not call him by that name. It's wrong."

"Is it? I don't want to do anything wrong. I'll think about it. What do you call him, now?"

"Just Mr. Tapp."

"Ho! That's what's above the door—Jacob Tapp. How would Old Tapp do?"

"That would not be so bad."

"Old Tapp, take off your cap,
Say grace and have a snap;

There, now, it's at it again,

"Have a snap or have a nap,
It's all one to Old Tapp—

And the potatoes not peeled yet." And he turned and ran up the ladder with the celerity of a cat.



CHAPTER V.

NED BRINGS HOME A "LOT OF MONEY."

AT night, when Ned described Lal Flanagan, and tried to repeat some of his talk, there was a good deal of merriment at first.

"You have got amongst funny people, Ned," said Leslie. "A master like a crow, who thinks aloud, and has for housekeeper an Irish lad, whose head makes poems, and whose tongue repeats them against his will! I wonder what odd person will turn up next. Perhaps Lal's mother, when she appears, will be as funny as any of them."

"Is he Irish, do you think?" said Ned.

"I suspect so."

"Well, he doesn't speak like the common Glasgow boys."

"Not so Scotch, you mean?"

"No; I suppose that's it."

"I have heard some very pretty and correct

speakers," said Mrs. Felton, "amongst the children of poor Irish parents, who had been at school and got refined a little. And as for oddness, your father used to remark that there were a great many curious people in the world if you were only in the way of meeting them. This seems to be a poor, half-witted creature, and you must not make fun of him, Ned, but be kind to him as far as you have it in your power."

"I would like to see him," said Johnny.

"I would like better to hear him," said Leslie.

"Come to the shop some day, Queen Bess, and I will introduce him to your majesty."

"I should feel afraid of Old Crow."

"Hush, Leslie!" said Mrs. Felton. "Take up some of your books, Ned, and refresh your memory with the lessons; and Johnny, if you are done, say 'Good-night.' Off to bed, and when you are in, call and I will come and tuck you up."

The two boys slept in the small bed-room; Mrs. Felton and Leslie slept together in the kitchen; and the third room, which was nicely furnished with the remainder of their former things, was kept reserved as a "parlour."

"O dear, mama!" said Leslie, "I don't think I am getting on with this work at all—can't bring money out of it. I think I'll try and get a shop

to keep, like Ned. Would Mr. Tapp take me, Ned, do you think?"

"No, Betty, he could not afford the big wages you would be expecting. He's rather a hard man, Mr. Tapp, I think—speaks too surly and crabbed for you, Betty."

"Don't think of anything of the kind, Leslie," said her mother. "There, that will do for to-night. Let us read a chapter of the Bible before we go to bed."

Edward read the chapter, and afterwards Leslie sang a hymn in a low sweet tone, the others joining in softly so as not to be heard by the neighbours. This was not a nightly practice, but was indulged in quietly as often as circumstances permitted. Mrs. Felton, though a sincerely religious woman, did not like to make a parade of her feelings or profession.

Two days afterwards Ned had another interview with "Lal." Mr. Tapp had to go out again, and he was no sooner away than Lal came creeping down the ladder, and Ned heard him saying:

"Jingling, jingling Jim,
Tingling, tingling Tapp,
Say grace and have a snap—hup."

"I say," he said, when he got to the bottom,

"have you a bit of paper? nothing of use, you know. Mother says I'm not to take anything of use. 'Honesty,' she says, 'Lal, is the best policeman.' But you see these two poems are mixing 'emselfes up and jumbling together in my head in a nasty way. I want to print 'Jingling' and get it out of the way."

"Will that do it?" asked Ned gravely.

"Yes. Here's how I found it out. Couldn't get peace at all, for 'Books new and old bought and sold,' 'Bookbinding done cheap in cloth, or calf, or sheep;' rumbled in my head and rattled out of my mouth till Old Bluebeard, Ogre, Old Crow—I mean Old Tapp, you know—let me print 'em, and they bothered me no more. What do you say to that?"

"Why do you call him Bluebeard and Ogre?"

"O! I don't call him that, but the names come somehow when I think of him. You see, he's a crusher—a reg'lar crusher—as snarly and snappy as a bull-dog, and as hard as a square of granite; and he has a lot of money like the robbers; and I sometimes think he is an ogre, and has eaten up Jigger, as the ogre did little Hop-o'-my-thumb—or at least wanted to."

"Who's Jigger?"

"Can't make head or tail of Old Tapp's books,

but have a lot of my own. What do you say to that? Ali Baba, Hop-o'-my-Thumb, Bluebeard, with grand pictures—what do you say to that?

"Old Tapp, take off your cap,
Stir 'em well and take 'em hot—

No, that won't do? What did you say?"

"I said, 'Who's Jigger?'"

"A little one he had of his own. Went out of sight ever so long ago. Wasn't good to him, mother says, and the little one *would* square up to him."

Ned had found a bit of white wrapping amongst the waste paper and asked if that would do.

"Tip-top. Sure it's no use?"

"Not much—to be thrown away."

"Then I'm off and up—Jingling, jingling Jim—hup—bother it! What day to-morrow?" he asked as he climbed the stair, but more slowly than he had done yesterday.

"Saturday."

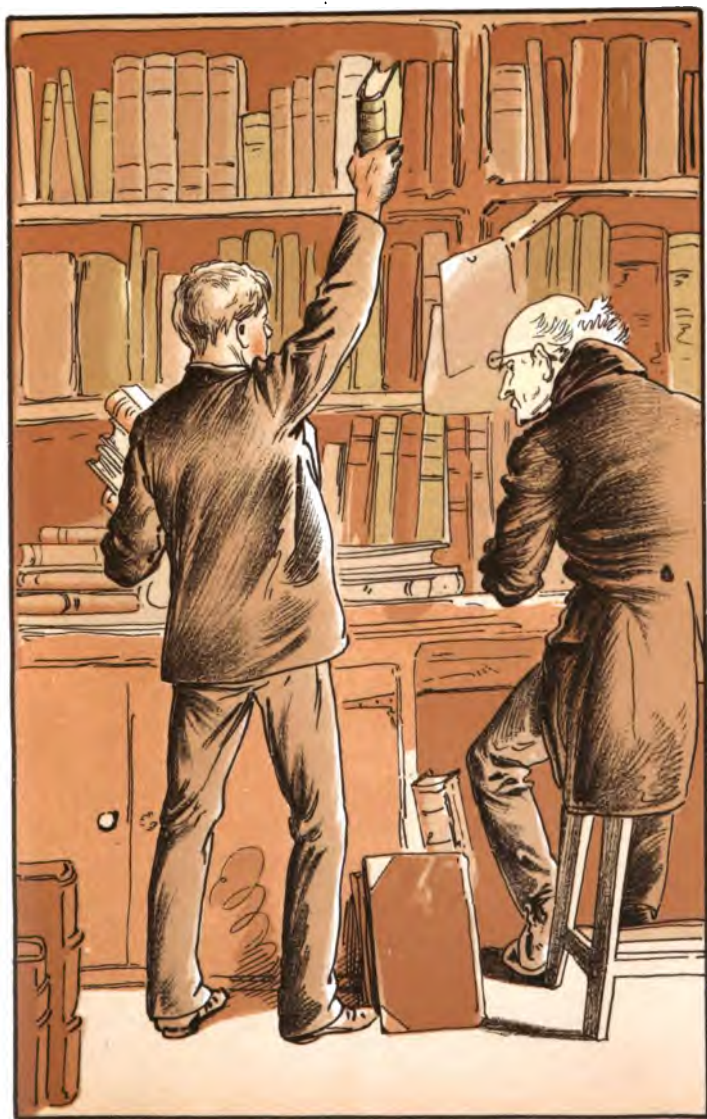
"And the day after that?"

"Sabbath-day."

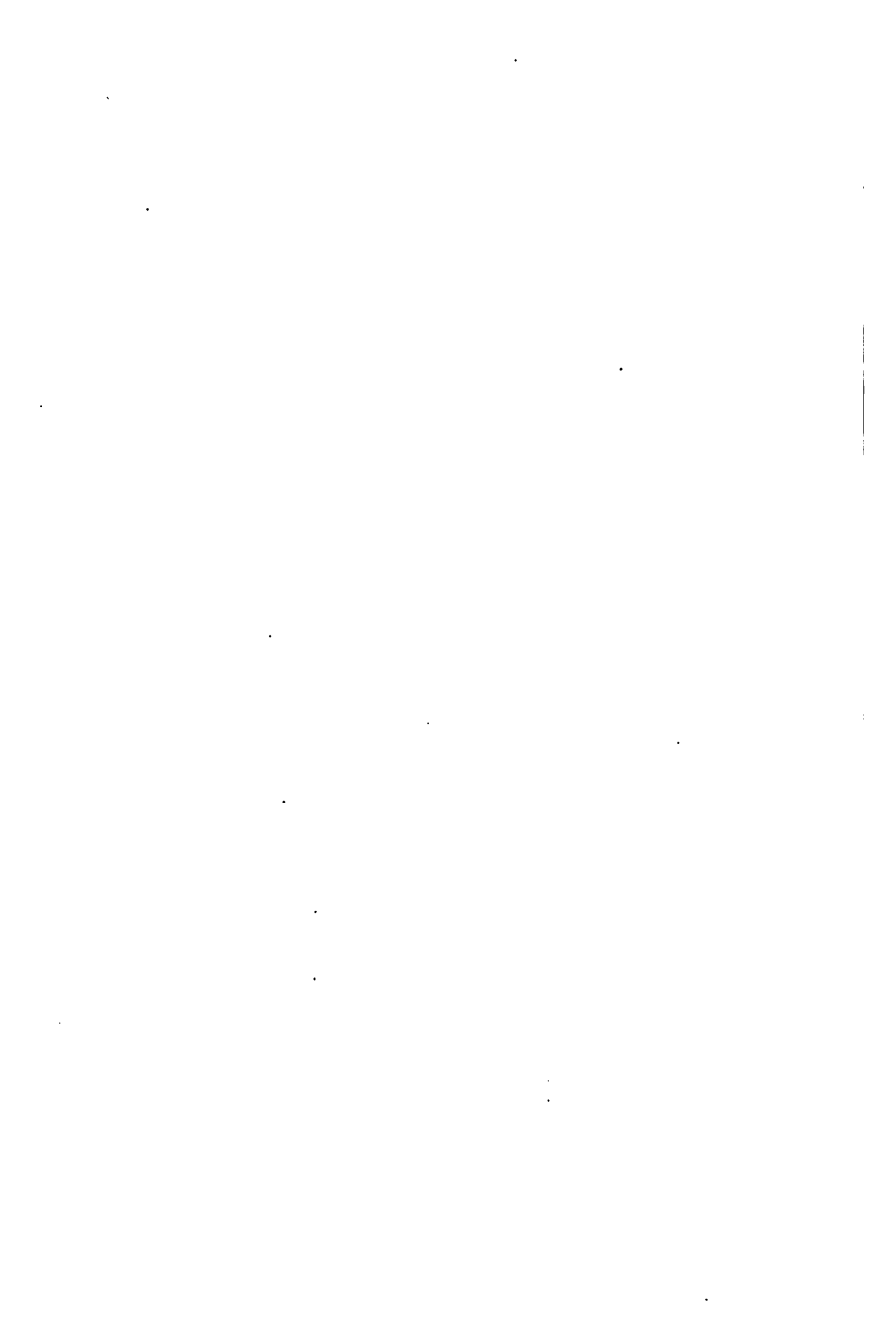
"And then Penny-day, eh? Isn't it?"

"Don't you know the days?"

"You might see I knows 'em, but I lose count of which of 'em comes next. But isn't it?"



NED BEGINS WORK AT MR. TAPP'S.



"It's Monday."

"Well, it's all the same. Monday's Penny-day." And he disappeared.

These visits were taking up Ned's time a little, but he was already able to look out a book and tell its price; at least all those on the shelves he had "learned by heart." Picking them out of the catalogue, he found not quite so easy as he had expected. The books were not all entered on the same principle, some of them being entered by the name of the author, some by the title, and sometimes by the first word of the title, sometimes by the second, or some other important word. It was a little puzzling; but Ned thought he would get to know everything soon if he worked hard, and he was determined to do that. After sweeping out the shop in the morning, and dusting the books, he studied the catalogue, looked over the shelves, and tried to put the books in better order. As for the new books that came in, which Ned got to enter in the catalogue and put past himself, he knew all about them, and could fetch them at once. A good many of the customers, however, did not ask for any particular book. They looked over the tables and shelves, and when they came on something they liked, asked the price. This Ned

could soon tell very cleverly, and to take the money, enter the sale in the day-book, and mark the book out of the catalogue—when it had been properly entered—was all quite simple.

Mr. Tapp he found a little "sour and crabbed," as he had said to Leslie, but on the whole not ill to put up with. He, perhaps, saw that Ned was endeavouring to do his best, and so endeavoured to do his best too; and on Saturday, though it was less than a week, he gave Ned the promised five shillings, muttering something like "poor woman—needs it no doubt," to himself, as he did so.

"Be sure and give it to your mother," he said aloud, adding, "and come a little before nine on Monday to take down shutters—not heavy. Don't be lazy;" perking forward his head as if he would have liked to give Ned a parting dig with his beak.

Ned went home very proud with his first earnings, and poured the shillings with a jingle into his mother's lap, who was sitting as usual bent over her white seam.

"There's a lot of money for you, mama," he cried. "See if I don't make you rich again. 'Jingling, jingling Jim,'" he sang as he danced through the floor.

Mrs. Felton smiled kindly on him, and her eyes filled with tears.

"It is your first earnings, Ned," she said; "and we shall celebrate the occasion with a nice tea. Leslie and Johnny are out getting some things. But oh! my dear boy, do not let your mind run too much on getting money. Let us be good and do our duty, and we will be provided for. How sorry I am that you have to begin the world so early!"

"I'm not a bit sorry, mama," said Ned, still dancing about. "What shall we have to tea, mama?"

"Some nice buttered toast; and I have still a little jelly left."

"Buttered toast and jelly; couldn't be better. And here comes Queen Bess and her little footpage. Tea's ready, your majesty. Slice up the loaf and I'll help you to toast it—

'Master Tapp, take off your cap,
Say grace and have a snap.'

Hurra! That's a bit of Lal's newest, Betty."

"I think he is infecting you, Ned. You are quite light-headed."

And so chatting cheerily, they prepared their simple meal and partook of it in gladness and thankfulness of heart.

Mrs. Felton would have felt almost happy had it not been for the thought that her small stock of reserve money was gradually growing less.

Next day being Sunday, they all went to the nearest church, and spent the rest of the day in reading and quiet talk.





CHAPTER VI.

LAL'S MOTHER.

ON Monday morning Ned arrived in Stebbing's Place just as his master was opening the door from the inside, and was shown how to take down the shutters and put them away in a recess within the shop.

"Now, let's see if you can put them up again," said Mr. Tapp.

Ned found he could accomplish that too by a little management, sliding each shutter carefully up the groove in which it lay.

"Rascal—stronger than he looks," said Mr. Tapp in his undertone. "Down in the morning, and up at night," he said aloud; "and pay all glass you break. Eh—do you hear?"

"Yes, sir," said Ned; "I can do it nicely."

"Now, then, sweep out."

But Ned was only half-through with his sweeping when a stout, red-faced woman, plainly but comfortably dressed in a woollen gown, small

checked woollen shawl, white cotton cap, and strong shoes, tramped into the shop, and set a water-pail down on the floor with a slap.

"I'm goin' to wash ye this morning, Mr. Tapp," she said coolly; and Mr. Tapp did not look as if he were beyond the need of washing, for, as Ned had observed, he was not usually very particular with his toilet.

"Ho! don't bother," he cried in his harshest tone; "I'm not in want of washing yet;" adding to himself, "Woman—wants to make a shilling; that's all that's about it."

"Not in want! Why, bless ye! it's three weeks sin' ye were washed, and how can ye but be in want of it?" said the woman, passing over his closing remark, unpinning her shawl and throwing it off with a jerk.

"Busy this morning, Norah," creaked Mr. Tapp, but not quite so harshly this time. "Can't have you slopping about. Come back next week. Confound the woman!"—in his other tone—"wash, whether will or not."

"There's no use spakin'," said Norah, as he had called her; "I come to wash ye, and wash ye I will. Am I goin' to have ye disrespectable, do ye think? Sure and I'm not. What would the folks say of me? 'Norah Flannagan,' they would be

after sayin', 'don't keep them as she washes respectable. There's that dacent man, Mr. Tapp,' sure, they would say, 'goin' about like a dirty pig in a sty.' I've my good name to mind, Mr. Tapp; and so like a dacent man put on your hat and go out to a book sale. There's always a sale somewhere; aren't there, now?" And she proceeded to make ready for her work by pinning the skirt of her dress behind and turning up her sleeves, displaying by the latter operation a pair of round, red arms, which seemed to have done a good deal in the washing way in their time.

What Ned was wondering was how his master could be washed if he put on his hat and went out.

"Confound the woman!" said Mr. Tapp again, but louder this time, as he put on his hat, a round, low-crowned felt which lay well back on his neck, and seemed to make him liker a crow than ever, just supplying the black knobby crown which was lacking before.

"And I'm goin' to wash ye above too, Mr. Tapp," said Norah. "Ye've as much need of it above as below."

"She wants another shilling," said Mr. Tapp as he disappeared.

Ned soon found out that it was not his master

that was to be washed, but the shop floor. There was a water-pipe in a small back room where Mr. Tapp sometimes sat and pored over a ledger; but before drawing a supply from thence, Norah came round and pulled the rope which communicated with upstairs.

"You need not pull it, mother," said a voice from the ladder; "I heard ye tonguin' 'im."

"Have ye the hot water ready, Lal?" asked Norah.

"Penny-day, penny-day, better than any day."

"None of your nonsense, now, but bring the water if ye have it."

Lal disappeared, and a few moments thereafter was at the foot of the ladder with a kettleful of steaming hot water.

"That's clever now," said Norah, "and there's your penny."

Lal grinned delight, and snatching the penny, was out by the front door in a twinkling.

"Poor fellow!" said Norah; "he's off to get another trash of a picture-book. He spends his pennies on nothin' else. Give me the brush!" and she took the brush from Ned, who had been standing with it in hand uncertain whether or not to proceed with his sweeping. "His new lad, I suppose. What's your name?"

"Ned."

"Ah—" and then after a few sweeps with the brush, "How do ye like him?"

"Who?—Lal?—"

"No!—What are ye smirking at? Is it the name ye think quare? Well, ye needn't; it's a good Scriptur' name. I looked it out myself—Mahar-shal-al; that's it in full; but it got cut short, and Lal's as good as Ned, I suppose, any day. Ould Mr. Tapp, I mean, how do ye like him?"

"Well enough."

"Isn't he hard on ye?"

"N—no—not much."

"Well, he's not a bad sort of man either. He tries to do right, but not a bit more, and he shaves it a little too close in my mind of it. How much are ye to get?"

Ned thought she was making rather free, but he told her.

"That's not so bad; and you're sure of your money—as sure as ye had it in the bank. But Jigger couldn't stand him, and more nor Jigger."

"Who's Jigger?" asked Ned for the second time.

"Well, I believe he's Old Tapp's grandchild, or something. An imp of mischief he was, to be

sure; but I always said he might have been managed. He was good at bottom—always was kind to Lal.”

“Where is he now?”

“The sorra knows. Old Tapp druv him away with his hard narrow ways, I suppose. Not but I think he liked the boy, too, in a sort of way, and meant good by him. But there—I’ve got to mount that sorrowful ladder—as if there wasn’t a good stair up from the passage.”

“Is there a stair? Why don’t you go up by it?”

“Hasn’t he got the door nailed up? Nothin’ would serve him but to get up and down without goin’ outside. He’ll fall and break his neck some day, and then who’ll get his money, I wonder? A good house it is, too—if he wouldn’t litter it up with old books that nobody wants, nor ever will want, I’ll go bail. Hould the ladder, will ye, Ned?”

Here Lal came slowly in, holding a picture-book of some kind close to his nose and muttering to himself.

“Hould the other side, Lal!” cried Norah; “I’m too heavy for it, and it shakes dreadful!”

So with both the boys holding on by the ladder—Ned laughing—he could not help it—but

Lal looking as serious as usual, Norah Flanagan and her pail went slowly up out of sight.

"Bring the kettle with ye, Lal!" she called down through the trap.

"Penny-day, penny-day,
Better than any day,
There you are again.
Turn out the rest o' 'em,
Give me the best o' 'em—
There you are again,"

intoned Lal, fixing his large, light-blue, serious eyes on Ned, and then Ned observed for the first time how thin, and pale, and weak-looking he was, and felt a thrill of pity run through him for the poor lad.

"Is that a new one, Lal?" he asked.

Lal shook his head. "Comes always back on Monday—printed it once; but no use, goes away when I am reading the new story, and doesn't come back till next Penny-day. What do you say to that?"

"What is this one about?"

"The Long Pack. Will tell you about it after," and up he went muttering, "Penny-day, penny-day, better than any day," but rather slowly—his run out for the picture-book seemed to have exhausted him.

Ned was kept busy with customers for the next hour. He succeeded in selling a few volumes at the prices marked, and was very particular in entering them in the sale-book, for he knew Mr. Tapp would examine the entries and compare them with the money in the till.

When Norah came down the ladder again with her pail there happened to be no one in the shop.

"He's not so well to-day, poor thing!" she said, as she was turning down her sleeves.

"Is it Lal you mean, Mrs. Flannagan?"

"Yes, indeed. He's not strong. I misdoubt me he'll soon be going after his father."

"Where is his father?"

"Where is he? In heaven, I hope."

"I thought perhaps he would be in Ireland."

"In Oirland! He never was in Oirland in his life, poor man. I come from Oirland meeself, as ye wouldn't think, I'm sure, from my tongue; but Jaimie Todd was never five miles from Cumlackie as I'm aware of."

"Was that Lal's father?"

"Of course it was."

"Then why—" Ned stopped abruptly.

"Why is it he's not called after his father?" said Norah. "'Cause I was only married two years, and I wouldn't have no name but Flannagan—as

good a name as is in all Oirland—I never could bear Todd—and Lal was called after me. I hope ye'll agree. He's a harmless thing with his stories and his poems."

"It's strange about the poems," said Ned.

"Ah—bother them; they come of his father, who was a weak, silly man when I took him. I thought to bring him round, but he slipped through my fingers—the 'wasting' as they call it here. He was ever putting words together into songs and that, and not being a writer had to keep them in his head and be everly rhyming them over. But I must be goin'," and she threw on her shawl. "Ye're a nice little, wise-lookin' chap, and somehow I've took to talking to ye. Do your work honest, and keep your fingers off the money, and Old Tapp will do ye no harm. But don't be put on by him neither. Ay," she went on, as if what she had been led to say had awakened some tender recollections, "Jaimie made a lot of what he called poetry, and used to sing and sing his songs over and over again. Here's a bit of wan he used to be everly at:

"'She's sweeter than the rose that blaws
Upon the bush beside the rill,
She's blither than the cock that craws
When mornin' glints out owre the hill;

She's handy at the pirren-wheel,
She'll stan' her ain wi' ony man,
At Oirish jig or Hielan reel
There's nane like Norah Flannagan.'

"That was me, ye know," explained Norah as she went out; "I give it as I got it; but some of the words I can't make sinse of. He was Scotch all over, was Jaimie."

At night Edward amused the little family circle with some account of Lal's mother. Leslie laughed heartily.

"Another odd person added to your list, Ned," she said; "I wonder who will be the next. I want to hear more about—Jigger, isn't it?—he'll be as queer as the others, I suspect. You haven't seen him yet, Ned?"

"No, Betty, and I don't expect to." But Ned did see him soon.

"There's not a great deal of oddity about Lal's mother," said Mrs. Felton; "so far as I can gather she's an honest, hard-working woman. If she was not, Mr. Tapp would not trust her so about the house and shop, you may be sure; and she gave you some sound advice, Ned."

"I wish I was going out about seeing some of these amusing people," said Leslie; "I am tired already of these horrid shirts."

"Hush! Leslie," said her mother. "No doubt it is a little tiresome; but think how many have to work hard for their bread just the same. There's not an idle hand in all this street, except the children's; and what with school and minding the smaller ones, most of the children are kept pretty hard at it too."

"Dear mother, I'm not grumbling," said Leslie with tears in her eyes. "If I am sorry at all, it is for you."





CHAPTER VII.

MRS. HORN.

SOME weeks passed over without any change in the condition of the Feltons. Mrs. Felton found that by strict economy she could barely provide the plainest of food for the family with the earnings of herself and Leslie added to those of Ned; but where clothes, and rent, and taxes, and Johnny's school fees were to come from, she did not know. She tried to keep up her spirits as well as she could and to look hopefully at things; and Leslie observed that when reading the little bit from the Bible at bed-time, she often turned to those passages which contained comforting promises to the widow and the fatherless, and to all such as walk in the way of righteousness.

She had been obliged to allow Leslie to take home the finished work sometimes and wait for more, and this rather increased the girl's dislike to her present occupation. Leslie went about the

housework blithely and singing like a lark, but when sitting over the white seam it was seldom that a single note was heard.

Ned, who had often heard her wishing that she had some other kind of work, took to looking over the list of "Situations Vacant" in the *Glasgow Herald*, which came to the shop regularly every morning, and one day his attention was caught by the following—at first by its oddity, and then because it was something like what he was looking for to suit Leslie:

"WANTED.—A healthy young woman who can live on plain fare, read Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* without yawning, and put up with an old woman's nonsense. Personal inspection on Friday between the hours of 10 and 12 A.M., at 283 Bath Street. No one need apply with a turn-up nose."

"No, it won't do either," said Ned laughing, after he had read it a second time. "Too queer a business for Leslie. But I would like to show it her. She hasn't got a turn-up nose anyway." So he asked his master to let him cut out the advertisement, and having got leave, took it home with him at night.

The tea, which was always ready just as Edward got home, was with its accompaniment

of buttered toast—which Ned declared Leslie made far nicer than the cook used to do—the pleasantest meal of the day. It was still winter, towards the end of January now (the Feltons' New Year time had been a quiet and a rather sad one), and the lighted gas and glowing fire added to the feeling of comfort. Then Ned had always something to tell, and something to hear; even Johnny had his little stories too, about school, his teachers, and schoolmates, his failures and successes in class. And Leslie did her best to make the boys talk, for, as she said, "it was all the glimpse she got of the world outside." She used to have girl acquaintances, but Mrs. Felton thought—whether wisely or not is doubtful—that since they had come so far down, it was better to break off associations which might be disagreeable to all parties. Tea was past therefore before Ned remembered the advertisement he had in his pocket.

"Oh! by the by, mama," he said then, "here is something that Leslie might like better than sewing," and he put the advertisement into her hand. Mrs. Felton read it, smiled, and gave it to Leslie.

"Well, at least I have not a turn-up nose," said Leslie after she had read it.

"That's just what I said," remarked Ned; "and you are 'a healthy young woman.'"

"I suppose I am," said Leslie, who seemed inclined to take it more seriously than the others.

"And as for living on plain fare," said her mother, joining in with a smile, "you've been serving an apprenticeship to that."

"Is tea and toast plain fare, mama?" asked Johnny.

"It might be plainer, my son; you might have the bread without the butter, and the tea without sugar or milk; but it is certainly not luxurious or very expensive fare."

"But could you 'read Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* without yawning,' Betty?" said Ned.

"Well, I don't know," still taking the matter seriously; "I never saw the book."

"What sort of book is it, mama?" asked Ned.

"It's about the Christians who were tortured and put to death for their religion long ago. I've seen the book, but I can't say I liked to read it."

"'And put up with an old woman's nonsense,'" quoted Leslie. "She must be a curious person; another of Ned's odd people."

"Well, you wanted to see some of them, Leslie. You had better call on her, at all events, and let her see your nose."

"It seems to be some eccentric old woman," said Mrs. Felton, "who wants a sort of companion, as it is called."

"I think I will apply, mama. Don't you think I might? It may not turn out so queer as it looks. She says nothing about salary, but there will be something, surely."

Mrs. Felton looked doubtfully at the girl.

"Could you do without me, mama? I might be able to help you more. I am not earning as much as keeps me."

"If it was for your good I would try to do without you. Doing more housework and less sewing would be good for me."

"You would be lonely."

"No doubt I would feel lonely—at first. But Johnny is only away from ten till four, and he comes running home at one for a bit of bread."

"To-morrow is Friday. I have a fancy to see about it, mama."

"Very well, dear; you need not engage if it doesn't look well."

"Perhaps she won't have your majesty," said Ned.

"Perhaps not," sighed Leslie.

So it came about that Leslie found herself ringing at the door of No. 283 Bath Street next

morning at eleven o'clock. It was a front door up a few steps over a half-sunk flat. The door was opened by a round-faced, good-natured looking woman of middle age.

"Are ye after the place?" she asked before Leslie had time to speak.

"Yes."

"Come in then; ye seem a likely lass. There's been naething but trash here yet."

As Leslie went in, a bold-faced young woman gaudily dressed, rushed out saying: "Such impertinence! I think so indeed!"

"I'm glad to see *your* back," said Leslie's conductor as she shut the door; "ye wud been nae credit to us, or my name's no Jess Tamson. The way's clear for ye, lassie; that's the last o' the batch. The twa before were a drunk wife that wud hardly tak' a nay-say, an' a wee shilpit thing that shouldna hae been oot o' her bed, puir creature. I was feared the mistress wud tak peety on her an' gie her the place. For between you an' me," she said whispering, "the mistress is no—" and then checked herself. "That's her room," she continued; "will ye gang in at ance, or wud ye like to rest a bit?"

Leslie said she would go in.

"I thocht there wud hae been a hantle mae,"

said Jess as she opened the door, "but," reducing her voice to a whisper again, "I fancy the folk tak' the advertesment for a hoax, as they ca't."

Lesbie stepped in and found herself face to face with a small, elderly woman, who was seated close to a blazing fire; and the first thing she observed was an extravagantly turned-up nose, in the hollow of which rested the bridge of a pair of round-eyed, horn-framed spectacles.

"My name's Bella Robbison, or gin ye like, Mrs. Horn; what's yours?" said the woman abruptly.

"Elizabeth Felton," said Lesbie, and she now observed that though the woman, or lady, spoke with a strong Scotch accent, she was richly dressed, and that though the want of teeth and a longish chin gave her a somewhat witchlike appearance, the eyes which looked through the horn spectacles seemed to twinkle rather with humour than ill-nature, and that the general effect of the face was not so forbidding as she had at first thought. She wore a curious sort of turban on her head, beneath which appeared some thin curls of gray hair.

"Ye're after the situation, I suppose."

Lesbie answered in the affirmative, but was beginning to think she had come on a fool's errand.

"Tak a chair then—na, no there—come nearer and let me get a look o' ye. That'll dae na, turn your face to the licht. Um—ay—very guid—nose a' richt."

Lesbie glanced round and saw that there was a smile on Mrs. Horn's face, and she could not help smiling too, and blushing a little as her eyes rested on the nose of her critic.

"Ha! ha!" with a sort of rattling chuckle, "hae ye found out why I couldna bide ane wi' a turned-up nose? Hoo could I thole ane sittin' fornent me a' day wi' a nose that put me in mind o' my ain? Na, na, I see't often enough in the glass," and she chuckled again. "Ye've a bit bonnie face, lassie," she added in a softer tone.

"An' noo about your victuals. What kind o' meat do ye like?"

"I'm not particular."

"A bowl o' porridge to breakfast?"

"Yes."

"Hauf a dozen o' potatoes an' maybe a reel herrin' at denner-time?"

"I don't care much what I get."

"A cup o' thin tea an' a scone at sax o'clock?"

"Well, yes. I might prefer a little toast."

"Weel, that's nae mair expense—just the

trouble o' toastin't; an' ye could do that yersel', I suppose?"

"Oh, yes!"

"An' maybe ye would toast a bit to me at the same time?"

"Certainly."

"An' nae mair till the next mornin'?"

"I'm not particular," said Leslie again.

"Ah!—weel, ye'll do on that heid." And Leslie thought she saw a merry twinkle in the old woman's eye.

"It's no but I've plenty o' siller," said Mrs. Horn. "I've mair than I ken what to do with. Ye see Horn an' me began wi' little—though he got on wonnerfu' an' left me weel provided for—an' I stick to plain leevin' on principle."

"An' noo," she continued, "tak that big book on the table there an' read a bit. But ye maunna gant (yawn)—I canna thole gantin'. Ye'll see a mark at the place where I stoppit."

Leslie drew her chair over to the table on which lay a large book like a family Bible. She opened it at the mark, and the first thing which caught her eye was a rather coarse engraving representing some poor wretches undergoing tortures of various kinds.

"'In the beginning'" quoted Mrs. Horn, "begin

there—it's the Tenth Persecution. I've been through the book mair than ance, but I just aye begin't again—it's very enterteenin'. No but what I read ither books tae, such as *The Holy War* an' *The Pilgrim's Progress*, but Foxe is my favourite; an' ye see my sicht's gaun, so I'll need some ane to read it to me noo."

So Leslie read:—

"In the beginning, when the emperor by his subtilty and wiliness rather dallied with the Christians than showed his rigour, he threatened them with bonds and imprisonment; but within a while when he began to work the matter in good earnest he devised innumerable sorts of torments and punishments, as whippings and scourgings, rackings, horrible scrapings, severe fines, &c. Also hanging them upon crosses; binding them to the trunks of trees with their heads downwards; hanging them by the middle upon gallows till they died of hunger; throwing them alive to wild beasts; pricking and thrusting them in with bodkins and iron claws till they were mostly dead; lifting them up on high with their heads downwards, with other devised sorts of punishments most tragical, or rather tyrannical, and pitiful to describe. As binding them to the boughs and arms of trees forcibly bent together, then pulling and tearing asunder of their joints and members by letting go the said bent boughs and arms of trees; choking of them with smoke, and scorching and broiling of them with coals."

"Isn't it dreedfu'?" said Mrs. Horn. "Does it no gar your flesh creep? The merciless heathens!" she cried in a shrill voice, crooking her fingers,

"I wuss I had them here! Wud I no gar them skirl! Ye may stop noo," she said, more quietly. "Ye read gey weel—but ye gantit," and the humorous twinkle was seen through the horn-framed glasses again.

"Well," said Leslie, reddening, "I really could not help it. If you had not mentioned it before I began. But I could not get it out of my head, and when I think about yawning I always yawn."

The old woman chuckled.

"Ha, ha—he, he! Weel, we'll maybe have to put up wi' a gant till ye forget aboot it. But, ye see, I got up Jess for a nicht or twa to read a bit, an' she gantit sae that I got clean mad. I daresay she was wearied wi' her day's work. I think ye micht dae, Elisabeth—that's a langsome name—"

"I'm usually called Leslie."

"That's better—weel, Leslie, I think we might get on; have ye a character, na?"

Leslie's face turned red again.

"No, I did not think of that. I—we—that is, my mother—"

"Ye've a mother then. What way is she lettin' ye out?"

"My father died quite recently, and—"

"An' left ye ill-off?"

"Yes,—I have to do something to help mother—"

"Ay, I see. Ye havena been in a place before."

"No."

"I think I might tak' ye on trust," and she pulled at the bell rope. "Jess," she cried as the servant appeared, "has ony mair come?"

"There's twa waitin', but," glancing at Leslie, who had evidently taken her eye, "they're no very nice-lookin'."

"Put them oot—no—tell them as pleasantly as ye can, Jess, that I've settled on ane—I'm sorry to have troubled them; an' stick up that paper on the door, 'Situation filled up,' an' let nae mair in." Jess went out to execute her orders looking quite well pleased.

"An' noo about wages," said Mrs. Horn; "I suppose ye'll expec' some?"

Leslie murmured something about wishing to help her mother.

"Would saxteen pound a year do? paid quarterly? that would be four pound to tak' hame every quarter to your mither—for ye would get your board free, an' I canna see that ye'll need mony claes. What say ye?"

Leslie expressed her satisfaction, and hoped she would be able to please.

"We'll see—we'll see—it's yet to be seen whether ye can put up wi' an auld woman's nonsense—he, he—Can ye come the morn? Or no, this is Friday—ye'd better no come till Monday. Can ye come on Monday?"

"O, yes."

"Very weel. An' as for the victuals, ye ken, I'll no say but ye may get something forbye your porridge an' milk in the mornin'—a cup o' tea maybe, wi' a bit egg, or a finnan haddock. An' Jess maistly insists on something mair substantial than a red herrin' at twa o'clock—a mutton chop, or a bit juicy steak, maybe—though I hardly approve o't mysel'. An' at tea-time she generally has biscuits an' jam on the table for onybody to tak' ane that likes, an' I canna say but I'm whiles temptit. An' ye may no gang without a bit supper either—bread an' butter—wi' a bit cheese—an' a drink o' milk—or maybe another nip o' tasty haddock" (and the old woman's lips seemed actually to smack beneath her upturned nose and twinkling eyes). "We'll no hunger ye, lassie—Jess is gey mindfu—but I'm a' in favour o' plain leevin' mysel'."



CHAPTER VIII.

"JIGGER."

WHEN Leslie came home and told her mother of the success of her application Mrs. Felton was both sorry and glad.

"It will do more than pay your rent, dear mama."

"Yes; but I never thought my girl would have to seek another home."

"Never mind that, mama; if it were not for leaving you I would be quite lively about it."

But Leslie did not go into a full description of her interview with Mrs. Horn and of that lady's appearance, manner, and talk, till they were assembled round the tea-table at night. There was then a good deal of merriment over the details.

"It is you who are meeting with queer people now, Leslie," said Ned. "She's the oddest of the lot, I think."

"I just wish you may be able to get on with her, Leslie," said Mrs. Felton wistfully.

"I don't fear it much, mama, if I can just manage to read without yawning, and put up with her plain fare."

Here they all laughed, for Leslie had repeated some of Mrs. Horn's closing remarks on that subject.

"I believe she'll turn out a perfect brick," said Ned.

"It's a strange notion she has to read about such horrors as that book is full of," remarked Mrs. Felton.

"I don't know that that is so very strange," said Ned. "I like to read about fights—hacking and slashing—with swords, you know, and shooting, and such like; and there's not much difference."

"Are you not past that stage yet, Ned?" said his mother, looking a little shocked. "But you are only a boy. At all events I'm glad to hear that her sympathies seemed to be with the poor tortured creatures."

"What did she say, Leslie?" asked Ned. "If she had them she would—"

"Gar them skirl."

And they had another good-natured laugh.

But Ned had something to tell that night, too; he had seen Jigger!

Here was how it happened:—

About an hour before shutting time, when the space in front of the shop, which, as we have mentioned, stood back from the line of the street a little, was rather dark, Ned saw a dirty, ragged urchin, somewhat less in size than himself, come out of the dusk and take his stand inside the shop-door leaning carelessly against the book-shelves. The boy's face was smeared, but it seemed well-featured, and he had a pair of keen, clear-glancing, dark eyes. Ned, thinking he was after no good, was about to shout to him to be off, when Mr. Tapp, coming out of the back room, got his eyes on the figure and made a dart at it. The boy did not move, but allowed himself to be collared and hauled into the shop, but at the same time yelling out: "Hold hard, grandy! Don't choke a fellow!"

"You little rascal!" snarled Jacob, "choking would be the best thing for you. What do you want here?"

"Take away your knuckles, grandy; I'm not goin' to bolt," and Jacob pushed him into a seat at the top of the shop kept on behoof of tired customers, and let him go.

"What do you want, I say?" repeated Mr. Tapp.

"I want a meal of meat," said the urchin boldly. "That's the first thing. I'm starving, grandy; give me a hunk of something."

Here Lal's face appeared half-way down the ladder, and he was heard to say, "Hoorah! It's Jigger—it's Jigger," as he took himself out of sight again.

"The poor thing's hungry," said Jacob to himself, but loud enough to be heard. "You impudent ne'er-do-weel," he said aloud, but turning short on Ned he snapped, "Can't you run up and bring down the loaf and cheese?"

Ned mounted the ladder and found Lal making a feeble attempt to caper through the floor (he had been growing sensibly weaker since the day we first saw him), and chanting:—

"Jigger comes, Jigger goes,
Where he goes nobody knows,
Nor where he comes from either, I suppose."

"I want the loaf and cheese, Lal," said Ned, "and a knife."

"Is it the big knife, or one of the little ones?"

"Any one will do; hurry."

"Is the Ogre goin' to cut off little Hop-o-my-thumb's head?" he whispered, putting a hand to each side of his mouth.

"It's to cut the bread. He's going to give that boy something to eat."

"O, the bread!—Jigger comes, Jigger goes—yes, the bread *and* the cheese! here they be!" And

Ned, getting hold of nearly a whole loaf, a good lump of cheese, and a knife, ran down with them.

"Must have a slice for Midge," said the ragamuffin who seemed to be known as Jigger, seizing the knife. Ned became at the same time aware of another apparition at the shop door. This was a very little boy, only about half the size of Jigger, bare-headed, bare-footed, and clad in some sort of tattered garment it would have been difficult to give a name to, who stood looking wistfully and timidly in. In a moment Jigger had a thick slice cut from the loaf and a square from the cheese, and making a spring to the door thrust them into the other boy's hand, saying at the same time "Slope!" In another moment "Midge," loaf, and cheese had disappeared into the night.

"Very nice!" snarled Jacob; "I'm to feed you and all the raff of the street!"

"He was near dead with hunger, grandy," said Jigger with his mouth full. "We've had nothing since yesterday morning, and the day after tomorrow's the fourth day. Four days of it, grandy—enough to make any fellow cave in," and catching Ned looking at him, he winked one eye.

"A fine story! [Poor little imps!—must not pity them, though.] Now, Jack, what do you mean? what have you been about?"

"Nothing particular."

"Where have you been hiding?"

"Nowhere—lots of places."

"How have you been getting your living?"

"Picking it up."

"Now, then"—the loaf and cheese having been disposed of—"are you going out? Time for shutting. [Couldn't keep him though I tried, I suppose.]"

"I'm back for good," said Jigger, putting his hands in his pockets and laying himself back more comfortably in his seat. "Think I'll try you again, grandy. I own beat."

"You impudent monkey!" said Jacob. "Into the back room with you—off your rags—wash clean. Lal will bring down some clothes.—Shut up, can't you?" he snarled at Ned. Ned did not require a second bidding.

"But I think, mama," said Ned when relating the incident that night at the tea-table, "the master was glad enough to have Jigger back, for all he pretended to be so angry with him."

"I have no doubt of it," said Mrs. Felton. "He may be a bad boy, as I fear he is; but Mr. Tapp may have treated him hardly, as that woman, and the silly lad too, seem to think; and the old man may have been troubled about him."

"I think Mr. Tapp is Jigger's grandfather."

"It looks like it. If he remain, Ned, see that you learn no bad tricks from him. You'll be careful, won't you?"

"Yes, mama."

Next morning when Ned arrived at the shop he found it open, and Jigger standing leaning against the door with his hands in his pockets. He had on a suit of clothes which, though rather short for him—small as he was, he had been smaller once—were whole and clean. His face was clean too, so that he looked a very different creature from what he had done the night before. His face was not unpleasing, but the sides of his mouth a little drawn down, something like a wrinkle midway across his nose, and a look in his eye, as if he "knew a thing or two," made him seem much older than his years.

"Hi, younker!" he said, "time shutters were off—must look spry," with an amusing air of superiority.

Ned said nothing, but took down the shutters as usual and put them past, while Jigger stood whistling with his hands still in his pockets.

"Been long here?" he asked, as Ned took the brush to sweep out. Ned told him.

"How do you call yourself?" "How old are you?" "Are you up at your fists?" "Can you stand on your head?" "Can you do the cart-wheel?" and several other questions were put in succession, which Ned answered as shortly and distinctly as he could.

"How much does he give you?" was the next query.

"Five shillings a week."

"Thunder!"

"What did you say?"

"O, nothing—it's just a word."

"Is Jigger your name?" asked Ned, thinking he should have his turn at questioning.

"Well, I answer to it; right name's Jack."

"How do you get Jigger?"

"Gave it to myself, I b'lieve, when learning to cackle. Better name than Jack, isn't it?—more uncommon."

Ned thought it was more "uncommon," but as to "better," he was not so sure.

"But I say, Neddie, how much do you crib?" asked Jigger seriously—"a bob a day, I bet."

When Ned understood what was meant he flushed up.

"Do you take me for a thief?" he asked indignantly.

"Ho! come now, don't flare up. Don't everybody take what they can—so as not to get tackled?"

Ned did not know what answer to make; but his mother's warning came into his mind, and he went away to the other end of the shop and began dusting.

Mr. Tapp now came down the ladder and creaked out: "Up and get breakfast, Jigger—Jack; then don't stand idling; set to and help Ned. [Was always a lazy rascal.] I'm going out for an hour or two. Help Lal to put things right before you come down. [Fellow getting more useless every day.]"

"Hope it's a good breakfast, grandy."

"Better than you deserve," snarled Jacob as he went out.

"Go ahead, Neddie," said Jigger as he mounted the ladder. "I'll be down and take charge. Mind I'm head man. Know precious well what the breakfast will be," he grumbled. "Better than nothing, anyway."

After a considerable time had elapsed Jigger came down again, and at once sang out, "Now, then, what's ado? any books to catalogue?"

There were some, and he set to and entered them very speedily and correctly, Ned putting them on the shelves as they were marked. Cus-

tomers came in and Jigger sold a book or two, Ned taking care to see that the entries were properly made in the sales-book and the money put into the till. But after an hour's work Jigger seemed to get tired of it, perched himself on a corner of the counter, and became confidential with Ned.

"You needn't look so sharp about the tin," he said. "Won't touch it—least, if I can help it—grandy always finds it out. Never would have touched it if he had tipped me a bit now and then."

"Mr. Tapp is your grandfather, isn't he?" asked Ned.

"So he says—s'pose he is; but never could do with him—hard as flint—so ran off, don't know how long ago."

"What did you do?"

"Ho! lots of things. Played the beggar—sold matches—tramped the country with an old woman—was her kid, you know—came back to town when the weather got cold, and scrambled about."

"Did you like that way of living? I should think it would be horrid."

"It was jolly, except now and again. Got starved out at last—me and Midge—so thought

I would come back and try grandy again. Going to stick at it—see if I don't. Midge, the little beggar," he continued; "don't know what will come of him. Regular little lost roll-in-the-mud. Took to me awfully—stuck like a burr."

"Is that the little fellow you gave the bread to?"

"That was him. We'll see him peeping about after dark, I bet. Must have something to give him. I say, help me to plan. I'll keep something off my dinner—though I feel awful hungry, hungry enough for two dinners. Don't you bring your dinner?"

"No, I go home for it."

"Who do you put up with?"

"I live with my mother, of course."

"Ask her for a slice of bread and bring it in your pocket for the little beggar—won't you?"

"Yes, but—" Ned was about to say that his mother had not much to spare, but he did not like.

"I'll smuggle a bit for him somehow," said Jigger.

And sure enough, that night Ned saw first the little dirty face pressed against the window, and then saw it peering wistfully past the half-open door. Jigger had been on the watch, and, Mr. Tapp being at the time seated in the back room,

he pulled something bulky out of his pocket and thrust it into “Midge’s” hand, with the same monosyllabic injunction—“Slope!” But this time Ned heard a thin tremulous voice say:

“Ain’t ye comin’, Jigger?”

“No—can’t—slope.” And he “sloped.”

This occurred every night, so far as Ned could observe, as long as Jigger remained with Grandy, Midge’s supply being often supplemented with a bit of bread which Mrs. Felton ventured to spare from her own scanty stock.

But Jigger did not long “stick at it,” as he had promised to do. He worked fitfully, but smartly, for a few days; then took to idling whenever Mr. Tapp’s back was turned. He was a lively little chap, however, in his idling. He would stand on his head, walk along the floor on his hands, turn somersaults here, there, and everywhere, sing street songs, and whistle like a bird. He would then borrow coppers from the till, and when Ned would not join him at pitch-and-toss, he played it by himself. Lal would come creeping down the ladder when he heard the noise, and sit and laugh at Jigger’s capers, muttering every now and again, “Jigger comes, Jigger goes, where he goes nobody knows, nor where he comes from either, I suppose.” This fun could only be

occasionally indulged in. When "Grandy" was about, Jigger had to keep quiet and busy himself about something. Jacob's eye was always upon him with a look of suspicion in it; and, as Jigger complained to Ned, he "never got out a minute to look about—not even after shop hours."

At length there came a night when, Mr. Tapp being out, Jigger said, "I'm off, Neddie; can't stand it a day longer."

"What do you mean?" asked Ned.

"I just mean as I'm going to hook it. Going to enjoy myself, you know." And when Midge appeared in due course at the door, Jigger, instead of handing him his supper, and telling him to "slope," jumped over the counter and "sloped" along with him.

When Mr. Tapp came in just before shop-shutting, Ned told him what had occurred. He snarled out something about "young vagabond," but looked troubled, sat down, and said in his peculiar undertone, "Heart-sorry, heart-sorry! A lost bairn!—a lost bairn! Am *I* to blame, Nelly? Am I too hard? or is it his father's nature?"

Ned afterwards learned that Nelly was Jigger's mother, long since dead.



CHAPTER IX.

A DAY WITH MRS. HORN.



UT to go back a few days.

On the Monday morning after engaging with Mrs. Horn, Leslie, with tearful eyes, bade adieu to her mother.

"I'll come and see you as often as I can, mama; and if you want me very much at any time, you have not far to send."

"Don't neglect your duties, Leslie, nor think of getting out often. I have no doubt I'll get on;" but there was a tremble in the poor woman's voice.

"I almost wish I had not thought of it," said Leslie; "but it seemed for the best."

"Let us hope so, dear. All we can do is to act for the best, so far as we can see, and trust the event to Providence."

So Leslie went along to No. 283 Bath Street, with a sadder heart than she had thought to do, and with many misgivings as to the new life before her.

"Come awa'," said the middle-aged serving-woman, who had called herself Jess Tamson; "I was feared ye might hae ta'en the rue. Come into the kitchen an' sit doon a minute. She's just finishing her breakfast. Ye've had yours, I reckon?"

"Yes," said Leslie, whose breakfast that morning had been just precisely what she had been promised by Mrs. Horn, a plate of porridge—only she had had along with it a tumbler of such milk as a Glasgow street dairy supplies; and this was not in the bond of agreement with her new mistress, whose later hints about a richer fare Leslie suspected to be a grim joke.

"Ye'll no be ony the waur o' half a cup o' tea an' a biscuit. It's a gude while till denner-time."

"I—I promised to be content with porridge," said Leslie.

"Gae wa' wi' ye!" exclaimed Jess. "Of course ye'll get a drop o' nice porridge. I mak' some to mysel' every mornin', an' I mak' them lucky, for the mistress canna want her saucerfu'—but that's no to say ye'll no get something after them. Hae, tak' that—I maun gang up an' see if the mistress is dune."

"Ye're to gang up," said Jess, as she came back with a tray, on which there were some remains,

such as an egg-shell, and the skeleton of a kippered herring, which did not quite harmonize with the "plain-fare" theory.

She found the old woman sitting as before.

"Hae ye brought your things wi' ye? Hae ye ony to bring?"

"A few—a small trunk—the boys will bring it in the evening."

"Whatna boys?"

"My brothers."

"Oo ay, your brithers. Hoo mony hae ye?"

"Two; one about fourteen years old, the other about eight."

"An' your mither's a widow, I think ye said?"

"Yes."

"I'll warrant she has enough ado wi' ye. Ye'll be aff her han' noo ony way—an' be a help besides. Ye'll hae the five pound to gie her every quarter, ye ken."

"Four," said Leslie; "it was four you said."

"Eh?—ah, but I meant five; it'll be five, Leslie."

"Thank you, ma'am."

"Nane o' your memin', na, to me. I'm just plain Bella Robbison; or if ye want to be respect-fu' ye can ca' me Mrs. Horn. Horn was a dacent, hard-workin' man, an' I'll never object to his

name. But come ben an' see your room, whaur your kist maun be ta'en." And the old woman jumped briskly from her chair, and, more nimbly than Leslie expected of her, led the way into another room which opened off the hall. It was a moderate-sized room, nicely furnished in an old-fashioned way. A chest of mahogany drawers against one wall, and a small press, very like a modern two-doored wardrobe, against another; a toilet-table with an oval-shaped looking-glass in the window; a neat "tent" bedstead with a white coverlet, and a basin-stand at its foot. There was a clear space round the hearth, and on one side stood a stuffed arm-chair, and in the corner next the wall a square cushioned stool, like a chair without the back. There was already a fire burning in the grate.

"This is your ain room," said Mrs. Horn, "where ye'll sleep, an' where ye can come for an hour at any time when I'm no needin' ye, or when I'm in ane o' my cantankerous fits. Will it do?"

"It looks very nice and comfortable; thank you, Mrs. Horn."

"That's richt; an' that's where I sleep, in the room just opposite. Tak' aff your bonnet, an' mak' yoursel' trig, and then come ben a wee."

Lesbie's heart felt lighter already—evidently her mistress wished to be kind to her. If it had not been for the thought of her mother sitting all alone at home.

"I think we may as weel hae a wee bit o' Foxe," said Mrs. Horn, when Lesbie returned to the parlour. But at that moment Jess opened the door and said, "There's that Seemon Snell wantin' in."

"Seemon Snell!" screamed Mrs. Horn. "This is no his day. What's the doited body doin' here on Monday? He ken's fine that Tuesday's his day."

"I tell't him that; but he says he's gaun oot the toon the morn, an' he wud like to get a look o' ye before he gangs."

"Ye ken this is the auld women's day, Jess, an' I've nae time to put aff wi' him an' his havers—but stop, since the body's there it's nae use sendin' him awa'. Tell him to come in for gude-sake an' tak' a look o' me."

Jess ushered in a little man with thick gray hair smoothed straight down on his brow, a nose not unlike Mrs. Horn's, but smaller, and with a less decided upward curl, with a face, indeed, altogether not unlike Mrs. Horn's, but more "wizened" and thin.

"Hoo are ye the day, Bell?" he said in a shrill

voice, going close up to her chair and looking narrowly into her face.

"Hoo do I look, Seemon?"

"Ye see I'm gaun north a bit the morn"—still continuing to examine her closely—"an' I thoct I wad look up an' speer for ye."

"Tuesday's your day, ye ken, Seemon, an' ye maun keep to the bargain."

"Ay, ay—ay, ay," taking a seat which brought Leslie within view. He gave a start, and rising, peered suspiciously at the girl.

"Wha's this ye've got, Bell?" he said anxiously.

"A frien' that's come to stay wi' me."

"A frien'! I didna ken ye had ony frien's. No a near frien', I hope?"

"Ha!—ha!" Mrs. Horn grinned and chuckled.

"Dinna be feared, Seemon. She's nae kin; just a lassie come to help me, an' keep me company."

"Ay," said Simon dryly, still regarding Leslie suspiciously; "I dinna like it—I tell ye, I dinna like it, Bell Robbison."

"Ye may either like it or no, Seemon Snell. Ye'll get my siller when I'm deid, maist likely; but I'll no ask ye hoo I'm to spend it while I'm leevin'."

"Weel, weel, Bell, say nae mair about it. Ye're keepin' gey an' weel, ye say?"

"I am sorry to say I am, Seemon," with the humorous twinkle in her eye.

"What aboot the pain in your back?"

"Clean gane, I doot."

"An' the palpitation ye spak' o' ance?"

"Hasna troubled me this mony a day."

"Hum! that's richt. Ye see, I thocht I wad just look in an' see ye. It's a lang time till Tuesday four-weeks. Ye're seeventy noo, Bell."

"Deed am I."

"It's the allotted period, ye ken, Bell; so the psalmist says."

"Ah! but," said Mrs. Horn sharply, "he says 'some four score they be.'"

"Yes," he admitted grudgingly; "but they leeved langer in those days, Bell."

"I'm gaun to leeve as lang as I can, Seemon Snell," said Mrs. Horn shrilly; "an' I think ye've been lang eneuch here, sae be aff wi' ye, and dinna let me see your sour-ploom o' a face till the morn four-weeks."

"Nae offence, nae offence, Bell," said Simon, rising; "but ye see I'm gettin' auld mysel'—turned sixty noo."

"Weel, be thankfu' ye're still in the land o' the leevin', an' the place o' hope," said Mrs. Horn with a chuckle. "Gude-day to ye."

And Simon, with another close look at Mrs. Horn, and a suspicious glance at Leslie, went slowly out of the room.

Mrs. Horn then rang the bell. "Has ony o' the women come yet, Jess?" she asked when the servant appeared.

"Deed ay, mistress; about hauf-a-dozen o' them sittin' in the kitchen glowrin' at ilk ither as if they wad fecht if they were able."

"Send them in ane by ane. Puir bodies! they havena muckle to mak' their tempers sweet. Some bits o' auld women," she explained to Leslie, "that come for an awmus (alms) ance a week, an' I like to see them an' speak to them."

An old woman came in, walking slowly and painfully with the help of a pair of staffs.

"How are the rheumatics to-day, Nance?" asked Mrs. Horn.

"Very bad, mistress; but I can aye hirple aboot."

"Do you no feel it bad for them to come this length?"

"Na; I think I'm the better o't."

"Are ye living wi' your dochter yet?"

"Oo ay—aye wi' Jenny, puir thing!"

"Is she still getting wark to do?"

"Oo ay; sic like's it is."

After one or two more kindly questions, Mrs. Horn gave the woman something, who said: "Mony thanks, mistress," and made room for the next.

Some six or seven old women, less or more frail, succeeded, were spoken to kindly by Mrs. Horn, and received their weekly present.

"Noo," said Mrs. Horn when the last had been dismissed, "ye'll just hae time to read a page o' Foxe before the denner comes in. I think Jess is at it," snuffing the air as if she enjoyed the scent wafted from the kitchen. "I aye weary for my denner after I begin to smell it—an' I think Jess has a nice mutton-stew the day—so I usually fill up the time wi' something horrifyin' oot o' Foxe. Skip till ye get something horrifyin'."

Lesbie did the best she could; and reading the account of a poor wretch who was flayed alive, while it made her shudder, did not destroy her appetite, for when the "nice stew" came in, with a little soup to precede and a suet-pudding to follow, she felt quite ready to taste them.

As for Mrs. Horn, when she had blown off her indignation by exclaiming: "The fiends in human shape! if I had them"—crooking her fingers—"I wad let them ken what skinnin' alive's like." She turned to the table and went through the

different courses with a vigour hardly to be expected from a woman of her age.

"We'll hae the red herrin' another day, Leslie," she said as she commenced the "stew" with her cackling laugh, and the twinkle in her eye; "but you see Jess has her way whiles."

After dinner Mrs. Horn settled herself for "a nap," and Leslie was at liberty to employ herself for an hour or so as she liked.

"I'll gie ye something to sew by-and-by," said Mrs. Horn—"some bit thing to mak' for the 'Dorcas;' but I've naething ready." So Leslie took a book from a number lying on the parlour chiffonnier into her own room and read a bit.

When Mrs. Horn wakened up there was another page of Foxe. "Can ye play the dam-brod?" she then asked.

"Is that draughts?" said Leslie.

"So I've heard it ca'd; but I aye ca' it the dam-brod, a mair sensible name, I'm sure."

"I've seen it played, but I never tried it myself."

"I'll learn ye. Bring out the brod an' the men; they're in that drawer."

By the time Leslie had got her first lesson at draughts it was the hour for tea. She found the tea not so thin after all, and she got her toast

without requiring to make it herself, and some nice biscuits to finish with.

A little later the boys came with Leslie's trunk, and Mrs. Horn told Jess to bring them in that she might have a look at them.

"They're nice laddies," she said as Johnny stood before her blushing, and Ned, less bashfully, with a critical eye fixed on her rather queer-looking figure; "an' guid scholars too, I dinna doot." And they were each made to read a bit of Foxe to prove their "scholarship."

"There's some fine pictures in that book," said Mrs. Horn. "Ye maun come some day and see them; but ye maunna stay oot later the nicht frae your mother;" and as she dismissed them she slipped something into Johnny's hand "to buy sweeties," she said. "The other ane's owre big for sic sma' presents," she remarked.

At nine o'clock Jess brought in what Mrs. Horn called "a bite of supper," which consisted of thin slices of loaf-bread and butter, with a small smoked haddock which she shared between herself and Leslie.

"Noo, I'm gaun to my bed," she said, after the supper had been eaten leisurely, the old woman chatting the while with Leslie about her brothers, her mother, and her father, and making herself

pretty well acquainted by the time she was done with the past and present position of the Felton family; "an' ye can either do the same or gang doon an' hae a crack wi' Jess. She's a decent woman, Jess; ye'll learn nae ill manners frae her."

Lesbie found her way to the kitchen.

"Come awa' ben," said Jess; "I think you an' me will be gude frien's."

"I am sure we will," said Lesbie.

"Is the mistress gaun tae her bed?"

"Yes; so she says. Does she not require help?"

"Na; she'll no let onybody help her either to put off her claes or put them on. I mak' every-thing tidy for her, though. Hoo do ye think ye'll like her?"

"Very well."

"She's a wee thing odd, the mistress; but she's a gude woman."

"I am sure she is. Look at these old women to-day."

"Oo ay. She picket them up ane by ane as they cam' to the door, till noo there's near a dozen o' them. An' on Wensday she has about hauf-a-dozen auld useless men that come the same way; an' on Thursday a wheen lassocks—schule girls—that come an' get a penny the piece. She began wi' *them* when she used to

gang oot walkin'—she's no sae able noo—giein' them a penny noo an' again as she met them here and there; an' noo she gars them a' come ance a week. They come in lauchin' and pushin' ilk ither, get their pennies, an' gang awa' again quite blithe."

Lesbie laughed, but at the same time felt a tear in her eye.

"Oo ay," continued Jess, "she has something laid oot for maist every day o' the week. On Saturday a young leddy comes an' gets her collection for the kirk, an' something to put in the poor's-box. Though she canna weel gang to the kirk noo, she says that's nae reason she shudna send her mite."

"She must give away a good deal."

"Oh! she has plenty o' siller. She was left wi' a fu' han', an' never cared to spend muckle on hersel'."

"And who was that—Mr. Snell, I think?"

"Ha! ha!—he's her cousin—the ane that's to get her siller when she dees—so she says. 'Blude's blude,' she said to me ae day, 'an' I'll no leave my bawbees past Seemon. I've nae ither connection noo in the worl', ye ken.' She disna hide it frae him that he's to get it, an' the narrow-hearted creature's wearyin' on't, though he has plenty o' his ain."

"And does she know that?"

"She kens't perfectly weel; but she just lauchs an' says, 'What's she carin'—she'll no dee an hour sooner for *his* wishin't.'"

"And she lets him visit her?"

"Ay, ance a month. He used to come botherin' up every ither day speerin' for her, and examinin' her wi' his ferret een, so she just said to him ae day—I heard her—'Seemon Snell, ye're wantin' to ken hoo sune ye're likely to get my bawbees. There's naething wrang in that, so I'll just gie ye hauf an hoor every fourth Tuesday—come in and hae a look o' me ance a month—but dinna let me see ye between the een ony ither time, if ye want me to leave ye a fardin'.' Seemon pretended she was quite mista'en, that he visited her just as a frien'; but he comes up as regular as onything every fourth Tuesday for a' that. The mistress just diverts hersel' wi' him. 'He'll wear himself oot wi' anxiety aboot the siller,' she said to me ae day after he gaed awa', 'an' dee before he fingers't.'"

Lesbie laughed, bade Jess "Good-night," went up to her own room, and was soon in bed sleeping soundly.

So ended her first day at No. 283 Bath Street.



CHAPTER X.

JIGGER CAUGHT.

HAL seemed to grow weaker and weaker day by day. Every time he came down to the shop, which he continued to do pretty regularly when Mr. Tapp was out, Ned thought he crept down the ladder more slowly. Often he would sit the whole time and say nothing but mutter over at intervals some of his doggerel rhymes.

At last there came a morning when old Jacob informed Ned that "that silly lad couldn't get out of bed. Had to make porridge myself," he grumbled, adding to himself, "Got into a fix—can't tumble him out. Better bring his mother," he said aloud; "you know where she lives?"

Ned did know—her address was, in fact, noted down on the cover of the sale-book in case she should at any time be wanted—and Ned had been despatched once or twice to warn her that Mr. Tapp "didn't want to be washed for another

week." Her house, or rather lodging, was in Dobbie's Loan; she shared a back attic with an old woman, who rented it from another old woman, who occupied the front attic, the two rooms having only one door to the stair.

Ned fortunately found her "at home," and she came with him at once.

"Poor lad," she said, "I've been looking for it—it's his father's trouble. Ohone! ohone! whatever shall I do with him? If I could take him home, but I can't, for I'm only a lodger; ould Biddy and I have only the one small bed between us. Ould Crow 'll be for havin' him out at once, I much misdoubt me."

But Jacob was not quite so bad as Norah had feared.

"Go up and look after your lad," he said. "Can't eat his breakfast after I made it for him. [Plague on't, I'll have her on my hands too.] Hi!" when Norah was half-way up the ladder, "you'll find some tea in the press, and some bread and butter."

"Shall I make a cup for him, master?"

"Certainly," snapped Jacob. ["You'll make it and drink it too, most likely."]

Norah reported after a little that Lal was very bad—"not likely to get up soon"—and stood

with her eyes fixed on Jacob, as if expecting the order to "take him out of that."

"Confound it!" he began, but checked himself. "Well, what are you glowering at?" he said; "you must stay with him, of course. Do you expect me to look after him? And—and—we must get a doctor."

"The Lord bless ye, Mr. Tapp; shall I see after your male of meat too?"

"Of course, woman, of course."

Ned was sent for a doctor. "There's an old man at the end of the street—the corner shop—won't be expensive," said Jacob.

So the old doctor came. As he went out again he shook his head and told Jacob the boy "would require to be taken care of."

At closing time Ned asked if he might go up and see Lal; and Jacob grunted assent. He found the lad in bed, and Norah busy putting things in order and preparing a cup of tea for Mr. Tapp.

"Is he very bad, Mrs. Flannagan?" asked Ned.

"He's revived a bit; but he's bad enough, sure."

"Bellows blow, fire glow,
Kettle kicking up a row,
Biz, bubble, rattle, roar,
Lift the lid and tip it o'er,"

Lal was saying as Ned approached the bed.

"Haven't got that one printed yet, Neddie. You might do it—might be all the same. What do you say to that?"

"We'll try it, Lal. I'll write it down just now, and print it at home, and bring it in the morning. Say it over slowly."

Lal shook his head. "It just runs along, ye must catch it as it comes." So Ned caught it as well as he could.

"They go away," said Lal, "when I'm reading a story; but I can't read to-day."

"Where's your books, Lal, and I'll read one to you?"

"There they are," said Norah, "all on the shelf at the window—a right lot of them."

"What shall I read, Lal? Here's *Cinderella* on the top."

"Yes; the girl that sat in the corner like me. But her head wasn't weak, was it? The things really happened. She didn't dream them. I dream about lots of strange things."

So Ned read over again the wonderful story which has delighted the children of every successive generation for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years, and Lal lay quiet with his eyes closed.

"Husht!" said Norah, as Ned finished, "I think he's sleeping. Go out quiet like a nice, kind lad,

as you are. But I'm afeard he'll have a bad time when he wakes."

"Mr. Tapp's not so hard a man after all, you see," said Mrs. Felton, when Ned told her about poor Lal.

"I think he's grown softer since Jigger ran away last, mama," said Ned. "He is very quiet and sad looking often."

Ned printed Lal's rhymes carefully, and next morning sent them up with Norah when she came down to "fetch some things." Looking round and finding that Ned was alone, she said:

"There's something come over him, sure."

"Who? Lal?"

"No, the master—Mr. Tapp. I'll call him Old Crow no more. He's given me a whole pound to get what's needful. Of course I had told him to his face that he didn't live as he should—pinchin' and parin', and taking nothing nice. I thought he would fly out, but he just gave one snarl and then quietly brought the money. 'Keep account of what you spend,' he said, 'for it must be marked down.' Of course I'll keep account, and markin' down 'll do no harm, sure."

Ned went up at night again to see Lal, and found him lying with one of the story-books in his hand.

"It keeps him quieter," said Norah. "He can't read, but he looks at the picturs. I change it for him now and again."

"The pictures tell the story same as the print," said Lal. "It all goes through my head just the same. What do you say to that?"

"Did I print the poem right, Lal? And did it do?"

"Yes," said Norah, "it did beautiful; I've heard nothing of 'rattle, roar' since he got it. I don't know what it will be next, sure."

"He's no better, I think, Mrs. Flannagan."

"No, nor ever will be," she said. "He's goin' to his father in heaven."

"He'll have two fathers to go to," said Ned, who was thinking of the prayer he said night and morning; "the same as I have now," he added after a moment's reflection.

"Yes, sure," said Norah, "that's one comfort the poor orphans have."

"Jigger, Jigger," muttered Lal.

"What about Jigger, Lal?" asked Ned.

"Ay, Jigger's an orphan too, poor fellow," said Norah; "but if he's to get to his father in heaven he'll have to mend his ways. He's a little out of his head, Neddie; I think you'd better leave him."

Ned thought of it afterwards as a strange coin-

cidence that Lal had called out "Jigger" at the time he did, and that he himself was thinking of Jigger as he approached a small crowd which had gathered round something at the corner of Talbot Street; for when, as boys will do, he crushed in to see what it was, there was Jigger lying on his back near the pavement. He heard a man saying: "The van turned the corner suddenly and knocked the little fellow down, but the man was certainly not to blame." A horse and van were standing near, and a policeman was bending over Jigger, and inspecting him as if he was some natural or artificial curiosity.

"Must get him to the 'ospital," said the policeman; "his leg's hurt."

"It's broke, I tell you!" cried Jigger, lifting one leg off the ground and letting it fall again quickly. "Don't I feel the bones grazing—Oh my—" and his face seemed to grow white beneath the grime with which it was overlaid.

"He've fainted, I b'lieve," said the policeman in accents of astonishment; and at the same time a sound of blubbering called Ned's attention to a small black figure sitting on the ground at Jigger's head. It was "Midge."

"I saw the thing happen," said another man; "that little mite was just among the horse's feet,

and the bigger one ran forward to catch him out, and was knocked over himself."

"Must be got to the 'ospital," announced the policeman again.

Now Ned had a great horror of hospitals; he thought nobody ever went into one and came out again alive; so he cried out: "No, no! I know him, take him—"

"Where, younker?" asked the policeman, looking down at Ned from an immeasurable height of dignity.

Ned had remembered that Mr. Tapp's house was already occupied by an invalid and nurse, and so had stopped short; but the next moment he said, "Take him up to mother; I'll show you where." Ned had once a leg broken himself when a very little boy, and he remembered how well his mother had nursed him; so without more thought he said, "Bring him along—it's not far."

"Gie me a lift wi' him, some o' ye," said the van-man, who was standing looking on with a grave face. "Put him in the van, an' I'll drive him cannily along."

Mrs. Felton was astonished when, in answer to Ned's knock, she opened her door, to be pressed back into the passage by two men carrying a boy in their arms.

"It's Jigger, mama," cried Ned, "knocked down by a van at the end of the street. Says his leg's broken."

"Where shall we lay him, mistress?" asked one of the men, whom she recognized as the artisan who lived on the same landing. She had no time to think of remonstrating, so led the way into the "parlour," and pointed to the sofa. Jigger came to himself as they were carrying him in.

"What are you running me in for?" he cried. "I haven't done nothing. It wasn't me. Oh my leg!"

"Now," said the mechanic, whose name Mrs. Felton knew was M'Nab—Duncan M'Nab—"the first thing's to get a doctor, I suppose."

"I know one," said Ned. "I'll go for him." And he was away like lightning for the same old doctor he had brought to Lal.

"I'll send ben Jenny," said Duncan M'Nab, "to see if she can help ye a bit." And the men went out and left Mrs. Felton in possession of her new charge. She felt angry at first, and almost wished she had Ned, to box his ears well; but looking at the poor little urchin lying in evident pain before her, her motherly heart came uppermost.

"Are you much hurt?" she asked, bending over

him, and shedding his long tangled hair from his eyes.

"It's only my leg. Who are you? Am I—is this—" looking round him.

"I'm Ned's mother, and this is my house."

"Thunder!" was all the reply as he gazed on her soft, kindly face.

Jenny M'Nab, Ned, and the doctor came in together.

"A clean fracture of front bone of right leg," was the doctor's finding. He had brought splints and wrappings with him in case Ned's report as to the nature of the accident should prove correct, and in a short time the bone was set and tightly bandaged.

"Now you must take off his clothes the easiest way you can"—the doctor had slit up the already tattered trousers without scruple—"and wash some of that dirt off him, without disturbing the leg, you know. Mind you, my little gentleman," shaking his finger at Jigger, "you mustn't move your leg on any account, or you'll never be able to walk again. He'll do nicely there; the seat is broad and the cushion soft, and the room is airy. Be back to-morrow." And the doctor left.

So Mrs. Felton had no resource, but set to, with

the help of the handy Jenny, and strip off the little wretch's clothes, which were both dirty and ragged—it was nearly two months since he ran off with them in good order—wash him with soap and water, and dress him in one of Ned's white night-gowns, not without many outspoken but unheeded remonstrances on the part of Jigger.

“Ned,” said his mother when in the kitchen for some fresh water, “what in all the world did you bring the boy here for? Have I not enough to do? Why not take him to his grandfather?”

Ned opened his eyes and stared at his mother, and then seemed to realize that he had done something foolish. He explained to her as well as he could what ideas had inspired him. “And you know, mama, you mended my leg so nicely.”

She smiled, and said no more at the time.





CHAPTER XI.

MIDGE CAGED AND JIGGER BILLETED.

WHEN Jenny M'Nab, after doing what she could to help her neighbour, had said good-night, and was crossing the passage to her own door, she tripped over something soft. The place was but dimly lighted, and on looking down she thought at first it was a bundle of rags; but the bundle stirred, and stood up on one end. Then she was conscious of two eyes staring up at her out of a very dirty face.

"What are you wantin' here?" she asked sharply.

"Jigger. I want Jigger," was the reply.

"What's that?"

"Jigger."

"I'll tell you what, my man; ye'd better be off, or I'll get the policeman to ye."

The little waif's mouth widened laterally, his eyes filled with water, and he began to cry pitiously.

Mrs. Felton and Ned, hearing a noise, came out to see what was the matter.

"It's some wee blackguard come up frae the street," said Jenny. "He says he wants Jigger or something."

"It's that little Midge," said Ned.

"Midge? Wha's Midge?" asked Jenny.

"He's Jigger's chum, and awfully fond of him. I told you about him, don't you remember, mother? You gave me some bread for him. Jigger's leg's broken, Midge, so you'll have to go away without him."

Midge fairly howled, and Duncan M'Nab came out.

"What's the little blackguard howling at?" he asked. "What's wrang wi' ye?" he asked Midge, taking him by the arm.

"'Cause—'cause Jigger's broke—" was all the reply he could get.

Ned explained the matter again.

"A little street waif," said Mrs. Felton. "Go in, Ned, and ask his companion if he has no home or place to go to."

"Jigger says," Ned reported, "that 'the little beggar has nobody as owns him, grandy, nor nothing, but just sleeps in closes or stairs, or where he can get himself shoved.'"

"Poor little creature!" said Mrs. Felton, and
 "Puir wee thing!" said Jenny.

"I'll tell ye what it is," said Duncan; "he should be given into the hands of Mr. Quarrier at the Orphans' Home in Morrison Street. He would be ta'en care o' there. It's no that late but I might tak' him doon yet. Fac' I'll just tak' him along."

"The best thing you could do, Duncan," said Jenny.

"Yes," said Mrs. Felton. "I'll take him in and let him see his companion and give him some food while you are getting ready, Mr. M'Nab."

So Midge was taken in to Jigger, who was now lying pretty much at ease in his new quarters, eating bread and jelly.

Midge gazed at him with his lip hanging and his eyes dim with tears.

"It's all up, Midge; I'm done for," said Jigger. Midge threatened to renew the howling.

"But he will get better, Midge," said Ned. "He will get better soon. Hush! don't cry."

"Ain't ye comin', Jigger?" blubbered Midge.

"Can't. Doctor said as I would be laid up for six weeks."

"Goin' back to grandy?" asked Midge.

"Well, I'm blessed if I know. You must get along by yourself for a little, anyhow, Midge."

"Midge is going to be taken to a nice home," said Mrs. Felton, giving the mite a thick slice of bread and butter, which he began to munch slowly and mechanically, with his eyes still fixed on Jigger. "A nice house, where he'll get plenty to eat, a bed to sleep in, and be made into a good boy."

"That's all right," said Jigger. "Wish I was there. Thunder if I don't—. I'm sick of it, but can't bear grandy."

Duncan now came in and took Midge by the hand.

"Come away, my little chap," he said.

Midge threatened to howl again, but Jigger stopped him. "Drop it, Midge, and go quiet," he said. "You'll be all right, I tell you. I'll look you up when I get on my pins—see if I don't. There you are, Midge, trot along." And Midge did go quietly, and was safely lodged that night in better quarters than he ever remembered occupying before.

When Ned left home next morning it was on the understanding that Mr. Tapp was to be told at once of Jigger's mishap, where he lay stranded, and how and why he was there.

"He must look after the boy, Ned," said Mrs.

Felton, "or really he will have to go to the hospital. Indeed, he could hardly be in a better place."

About an hour after Ned left, and when Johnny had gone off to school the door-bell rang, and when Mrs. Felton opened, there was Mr. Tapp, his nose perked forward, and his round cap on the back of his head, looking as like a crow, Mrs. Felton thought, as ever. She recognized him at once.

"Where is he?" he asked abruptly; and without a word of reply she turned and led the way into the parlour, hearing his creaking voice behind her as he followed say something like, "Wonderful—woman don't care to wag her tongue—looks pale—not well off."

"Here's your grandfather come to see you, Jack," she said (for she had learned what the boy's proper name was, and she would not use the other).

There was Jigger lying clean and neat, but with a flushed face, for the hurt was fevering him a little now.

"What!" creaked Jacob, "what—the—the—what?"

"I couldn't help it, grandy," said Jigger deprecatingly. "Midge had to be took out, hadn't he? Couldn't see the little beggar squashed."

"You've been a lot of trouble, Jack; you've been a bad boy, Jack."

Jigger's head turned impatiently from side to side, and he cast a furtive look at Mrs. Felton's face.

"You've run away twice, Jack."

"You needn't tell a fellow what he knows."

"I'm glad you know you've been a bad boy."

Jigger was going to disavow that admission, but he looked again at Mrs. Felton, and shut his lips hard.

"Ned's mother has been very kind to me anyway," he said.

"You're fixed now, Jack, for six months."

"Six weeks at least," said Mrs. Felton.

"Pity but it was six months," said Mr. Tapp in his undertone. "Would be the better of it. But must be taken care of, poor fellow. Like his mother lying there."

Mrs. Felton moved away to leave them alone, but Jacob followed her to the kitchen.

"I wonder if she would nurse him," he said, thinking aloud, and looking her straight in the face—"a nice lady-like woman—has seen better days—if I paid all expenses."

"As for nursing him—" said Mrs. Felton.

"Eh? what?"

"You said something about me nursing him."

"No, I didn't; but the idea was passing through my head. Would you? It would be a great kindness to him and me. Pay all expenses, you know—doctor—keep—your time and trouble, eh? What do you say?"

"Well, I might, but I couldn't afford—"

"No, no, of course not."

"But I must say I feel some pity for the little fellow; and perhaps I might be able to do him some good besides merely nursing him. Has he ever had a mother's care?"

"No—poor Nelly—he's been a great trouble."

"Think, Mr. Tapp, whether there has been no fault—no shortcoming on your own side. You may have been a little too hard on him."

Jacob stared at her a moment without speaking; he then took off his cap, rubbed his hand slowly over his bald head, muttering something, but this time so low as to be quite inaudible, put on his cap again, turned, and walked slowly out of the house.

So Mrs. Felton was left with a new care on her mind and a new task in hand.

But nursing was a duty she had always liked; and Ned brought from Mr. Tapp in the evening a supply of money, with instructions that she was to take what was proper, but "keep a strict account of it."



CHAPTER XII.

JIGGER GOES TO STEBBING'S PLACE AND
LAL LEAVES IT.

JIGGER, or Jack, as Mrs. Felton insisted on him being called, "since he had a decent name to be called by," did not prove so troublesome a patient as his nurse had feared he would do. It turned out not to be a bad case of fracture. The slight touch of fever passed away, and almost the only pain he suffered arose from the necessity of lying long in one position, so as not to disturb his leg. By following the old doctor's advice, however, and by soft and dexterous handling, Mrs. Felton managed to make the constraint pretty easy for him. He proved to be very patient and obedient, and seemingly grateful for the kindness shown him. He took greatly to his nurse. When she was long absent he became uneasy; and when she was moving about the room his eyes followed her around, and when they rested on her seemed to

lose the sharp cunning expression, and to become quite soft and dreamy.

The six weeks—the doctor insisted on six weeks—that elapsed before he was allowed to put his foot to the floor, were on the whole very pleasant weeks to Jigger. Besides the pleasure he felt in being nursed by Mrs. Felton, he had Ned often beside him, and sometimes Johnny; and he got some story-books to read when alone, books the Feltons had brought with them from their other house.

These weeks, and the weeks that followed before he was allowed to go down-stairs, were very important as well as pleasant ones to Jigger. A gradual revolution seemed to be quietly taking place in his character, or rather in the feelings, desires, and convictions out of which character grows. Mrs. Felton did hope that the many quiet talks she had with him were producing good effects. One day she would bring out by means of a story, or some striking incident, the dreadful consequences of the sort of life he had begun to lead; another day she would speak of the happiness which came of doing one's duty, though it should be a little irksome at the time; or she would talk about his grandfather, how lonely he was, how unhappy Jack's conduct must

be making him, and of the obedience which Jack owed him.

But perhaps it was more the kindness with which he was treated, seeing how happily the Feltons lived, and the softening influence of association with people of a better kind than he had ever lived with, which wrought the change. And when Leslie came more about the house (as she began soon to do), with her pretty smiling face, cheery trills of song, and a kind word and gentle touch for Jack, it was quite a revelation to the boy. Of course he was only a boy, and Leslie was a young woman of eighteen; but for all that, the mere coming in contact with so bright and pure a creature had a wonderful effect on Jack.

"Are mothers all like your mother, Ned?" he said one day when the two were alone together.

"I don't know—I suppose not. All good mothers are."

"And sisters like Leslie?"

"Come, now, Jack, how can they be all alike?"

"It don't matter—I have none of 'em."

"You have your grandfather."

"That's different. Grandies snarl at you, and chuck you about when you're little, and nag you when you're big, and drive you to make a run for it."

"I get on with your grandfather."

"'Cause you knuckle down to him."

"No; but I try to please him—I've a right to. You should try to please him too."

"A precious hard job."

But Jack perceptibly softened towards his grandfather; and Mr. Tapp, when he came to see how his grandson was getting on—which he did about once a week—showed signs of softening too, referring less and less to his misdeeds and the "trouble" he had been. Latterly, indeed, there came to be very little said between them. Mr. Tapp would sit for five minutes looking at Jack, while Jack looked out of the window or at a picture on the opposite wall, and then go away.

On the occasion of his last visit, when Jack had shown himself able to move about with the aid of a stout walking-stick which had been shortened for him, he said, after rising to leave:

"The little room at the back is cleaned out—bed put up in it—Norah did it—Ned will help you along;" adding to himself, "Must try and get along better with the lad."

Jack said nothing, but two mornings later got himself dressed before Ned went out, and after breakfast said, looking wistfully in Mrs. Felton's face, "Think I'll try grandy again."

"Of course you will," said Mrs. Felton; "what else could you do? You're going back to be-have yourself like a little man—to help your grandfather, and make him happy in his old days."

Jack looked rather doubtful.

"Of course you must be obedient, Jack, and steady, and honest, and truthful—no more running away, Jack. And I think, if you do right, you will find your grandfather kinder than he used to be. Try and get on with him, my boy. It will make me very happy to hear you are getting on all right."

"Will it, though?"

"Yes, it will, Jack."

Jack seemed to brace himself up.

"But you will come back and see me often, Jack?"

"May I come?"

"Certainly; we shall all be glad to see you."

So Jack limped along to Stebbing's Place, with the help of his walking-stick and Ned's arm, and gave himself up into the custody of his grandfather and Norah Flannagan.

For, long before this poor Lal had gone to his "two fathers," and Norah had been regularly in-

stalled as housekeeper to Mr. Tapp. It was on an afternoon in April, when the sun was reddening with his last rays the projecting wall of the next house, that Norah came running down the ladder and said:

"Will you please to come up, Mr. Tapp; or you, Neddie?"

Ned, after looking at his master and getting a nod from him, followed her up.

"There's a blessed change come over his face," said Norah, "and I know what it means; and I just felt a trifle lonesome."

Lal was lying on his back with his eyes wide open, and breathing softly but very slowly. There was a more collected look in his eyes, and a happy, restful expression on his face, as of one relieved from pain.

"It's Neddie come up to see you, Lal," said Norah—"to see you before you go away."

Lal turned his face more towards them. "Can't I get the books with me?" he asked in a weak whispering voice.

"No, my darlin'," said Norah, a tear filling each eye. "But you won't need them no more."

"Not to keep my head straight?"

"No, acushla! your head'll be all right where ye're goin'."

"Are the rhymes troubling you, Lal?" said Ned.

"Not now; they were in the night—all came back—printed ones and all, mixing up. 'Jingling Jim' couldn't get along for 'Take 'em hot,' and 'Penny-day' would trip 'em all up." And after regaining a little breath he went on: "But it's all right now—only a pleasant sound in my head as if they was all agreed and singing sweet together; and it's getting further and further away, as if it was up in the air."

"It's the angels he's hearing, the blessed darlin'!" said Norah, now fairly weeping; and Ned was crying too.

"Mother, if I can't get the books with me, give them to Neddie; and some of them to Jigger. I'm going to sleep." And he turned his face upwards again.

The sun-touched wall reflected a golden light through the window on Lal's face; and as it slowly faded he fell into the deep and dreamless sleep from which there is no waking on earth.

"The angels have got him now!" said Norah, tenderly closing his eyes.

It was after Lal's funeral, all the expenses of which Mr. Tapp took on himself, that Norah Flannagan stood in the shop one morning, with

cap and shawl on, prepared to go home. She had washed Mr. Tapp both above and below the previous day, and having made him all "nice and comfortable," she was ready to go.

"Where are you going?" snarled Jacob.

"Where should I be going but home?" said Norah.

"You're not going a step."

"Do you mean you want me to stay on, Mr. Tapp?"

"Of course I mean it. [Woman's honest—good housekeeper, if she would just hold her tongue.]"

"Well, Mr. Tapp, I don't care; if you give me a dacent bit of mate, and a shilling or two now and again to buy a new cap or a pair of shoes."

"You'll get what's right."


So Norah went up the ladder again; and we may say here that neither she nor Mr. Tapp had ever cause to regret the arrangement.





CHAPTER XIII.

ALLAN FRASER.

FTER a week or two Leslie came to feel quite at home in No. 283 Bath Street. The eccentricities of Mrs. Horn amused her; and when she found out that underneath the oddities of her manner there was not only much kindly humour, but real goodness of heart, she began to love her old mistress. She became quite happy, and the gaiety of her heart began to break out in little warbles of song. And Mrs. Horn seemed to reciprocate the liking; she was never happy except when the girl was beside her reading "Foxe," learning to play draughts, putting things to right about the room, or perhaps helping her to give audience to her old women, old men, or little girls, and distribute to them their weekly allowances.

"Dear me, lassie!" said Mrs. Horn one morning after breakfast, when Leslie was dusting and rearranging the ornaments on the mantel-piece,

singing softly the while, and her face lighted up with the glow which comes from a young, innocent, and contented heart—"Dear me, lassie! your mither must miss you sairly!"

Lesbie's face shadowed a little, for the thought of her mother was the one thing which troubled her.

"She—she is always busy," said Lesbie, not knowing well what to say; "and she has Ned and Johnny."

"Hut! twa laddies!—maist o' the day oot, an' a bother when they're in. But the like o' you!—ay, she must miss ye sairly."

"It is duller and harder for her, no doubt; but then—"

"Ha'e ye been to see her?"

"O, yes; that afternoon you told me I might go out—"

"Hut! ye should gang oftener."

"I—I didn't know that—that you—"

"Ye didna know! What for should ye no ken? Nae doot I'm selfish an' thochtless, but I'm no sae bad's that. Div ye hear? ye'll gang till her every day after denner. What am I doin' but sleepin' then, onyway? If ye're back by tea-time I'll no miss ye. I'll be glad to get quit o' ye for an hour or twa. It's no that far either."

The tears started into Leslie's eyes, and she tried to say a word of thanks.

"Thanks! what is there to thank for? Gi'e us a page o' 'Foxe;' ye're at the tearin' to bits wi' teegers an' lions—Dod! if I had them here I wad tear them!" crooking her fingers, and leaving it to be inferred who would be the objects of her vengeance. "Then we'll ha'e the denner—I think," snuffing, "it's a bit nice roast o' mutton the day; an' then ye'll put on your bonnet an' your cloak, an' gang roun' an' cheer your mither up a bit."

That was how it came about that Leslie was so much at home while Jigger was there. Mrs. Felton had not well got her house in order when there was Leslie to chat and laugh with her, to do any house-work that might be waiting, or sit down and sew a bit for her.

Another forenoon—it was a Tuesday, and Simon Snell had just newly paid his monthly visit, and had retired evidently disappointed to find the old woman so lively—Mrs. Horn said:

"Sing a sang, Leslie, to put the taste o' that body oot o' my mooth. He's my cousin; I'm no gaun to cast oot wi' him, an' he'll get my siller when I'm dune wi't, but I canna bide the body's way. If Allan had been spared he'd have got

nane o't—at least, no much. Ah, puir laddie! puir laddie! my heart's sair when I think on him;" and her voice trembled a little. "Sing a sang, Leslie; I was gaun to say something cheery, but noo I think I would like something waefu'. I ken ye can sing."

Leslie had never sung an entire song since her father's death, though she had some in her memory. She felt a little embarrassed, and looked round as if in search of something.

"What is't? What are ye lookin' for?" asked her mistress.

"O—nothing—only when I used to sing it was mostly with an accompaniment."

"Wi' a piano!" shrieked Mrs. Horn. "Na, na, I ne'er could bide the bang-bangin' o' a piano. I'm very fond o' a sang—especially an auld Scotch air, but I ne'er could mak' oot the words nor the tune either when a piano was deavin' me. Ye can sing without thumpin' on a piano, can ye no?"

"O yes, quite well," said Leslie; and she sang "Logan Braes" very softly and sweetly.

"That's unco nice," said Mrs. Horn. "Let me hear anither ane, no just so waefu'!"

Leslie sang "Home, sweet home!"

"That's unco nice tae. We'll hae ane or twa every day. Ye'll hae lots o' them?"

"Well, I have only the words of a few in my memory; but if I had a book, there's a great many I could sing."

"An' what for hae ye no a book? Ye'll no want a book. Gang oot this very minute—the sun's shinin' an' the walk will do you good—an' get a book—as big a ane as ye can get—there's siller. See that there's a lot o' gude auld Scotch anes, na."

Lesbie brought in with her a bulky volume containing a great variety of songs with the music, and song-singing became one of her regular duties. "Burns," indeed, bade fair to supersede "Foxye," for sometimes two days would now pass without Mrs. Horn's wrath being excited by a single case of martyrdom.

But something happened after Lesbie had been three or four months with Mrs. Horn—just about the time when Jigger hirpled along to "try grandy" again—which made a great change in the Bath Street house.

Lesbie had just returned from her daily visit to her mother. The tea-things were on the table, and Mrs. Horn was mentioning that "Jess was gaun to gie them a kippered herrin' as a bit extra relish, seein' they had only had tinned meat to

their denner," when a ring came to the front-door bell. Jess was heard to open the door, and after a little to utter an exclamation. Some one then seemed to come in along with her, and no more was heard for some time.

Mrs. Horn began to look impatiently at the clock, which usefully as well as ornamentally occupied the centre of the mantel-piece, and at length she exclaimed:

"Bless me! what's come owre Jess? Twenty minutes past six, an' the tea no in! What's keepin' her—wha can she have in wi' her? Ring the bell, Leslie, for be't wha like, we canna want our tea."

Just then the door opened, and Jess presented a face, the aspect of which it was difficult to interpret. There was a scared look, a glad look, and a look as if she had been crying, and was disposed to cry again.

"What is't?" said Mrs. Horn impatiently. "Ye look as if ye had seen a ghost."

"It's no his ghost," said Jess; "it's—it's himsel'; an' though it had been his ghost I'm sure I wudna hae kenned it—till it spak', an' said in the auld voice, 'Jess, do you not know me?'—he's grown sae, an' is sae manly—wi' a beard on his lip—I thocht I wad hae fa'n doon through the floor."

"What's the woman ravin' about? Wha is't ye hae in wi' ye, Jess? I heard somebody come in."

"It's him."

"But wha's him, ye eediot?"

"Allan. Allan Fraser."

The old woman's whole body gave a convulsive twitch as if she would spring from her seat; but she only grasped the arms of her chair tightly, and looked hard at Jess.

"I tell't him," said Jess, "that ye thocht he was drooned, an' I had better speak to ye first, or ye wad likely get a start."

Mrs. Horn seemed to recover herself with a strong effort.

"If the laddie's there," she said calmly, "send him in."

Jess just turned her head and said, "Allan, ye may gang in noo;" when a tall young man in a garb which, though not that of a common sailor, somehow suggested the sea, came in—a fine young fellow he was, of perhaps twenty-three years of age, with bronzed face, brown eyes and hair, a bold, frank look and pleasant smile.

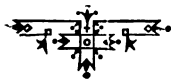
"How are you, aunt?" he said, stepping forward and taking Mrs. Horn by the hand. "Or are you still so angry you won't speak to me? I had some difficulty in finding you out."

"I think ye have had some difficulty, Allan Fraser, seein' it has ta'en ye sax years. Are na ye a cool ane, an' have na ye a gude stock o' impudence to gang owre the door-stap ae day, an' come back anither wi' sax year atween them, wi' a 'how-do-ye-do' as if ye had said 'gude-be-wi-ye' just yesterday?"

"Can you not forgive me yet, aunt?"

For answer the old woman rose, reached up her hands to his shoulders—or as near them as she could get, saying: "O Allan, Allan! ye've cost me mony a waefu' nicht an' day; how could ye do it?" and she laid her face on his breast.

Lesbie saw her shoulders heave as with ill-suppressed emotion, and thinking it was not a scene for a stranger to witness, slipped quietly from the room.





CHAPTER XIV.

ALLAN'S STORY.

GOING down to the kitchen, Leslie found Jess wiping her eyes with her apron.

"O, miss Leslie!" she exclaimed; "to think o't! The mistress *will* be glad."

"What is it, Jess? Who is Allan Fraser?"

"Eh! Did she never speak o' him to ye?"

"No—yes, I think she did once mention the name."

"Allan's the mistress's nephew."

"But I thought she spoke of him as one who had died."

"Ah!—yes, we a' thocht him deid. Ye see his faither was a sailor, an' his mither the mistress's only sister—a much younger woman she was than the mistress—an' when his faither was drooned, an' his mither died, the laddie was taen in by the mistress—wha had nane o' her ain—an' cam' to be like her son."

"I see—"

"She eddicate him weel, as if she meant him to follow some genteel wark; but when he grew to be a big lad naething wad content him but he maun gang to sea. The mistress wadna hear tell o't, for he was the licht o' her e'e, and nae doot she meant to leave him her siller; so what does Allan dae but rin aff without sayin' by your leave. We heard naething aboot him for a lang time, when a letter cam' to the mistress frae him. He had been ae voyage, an' was just startin' on anither, an' he asked her to forgie him, an' if she was still frien's wi' him to write an' tell him. It was a bonnie letter, for I heard it read an' had a greet owre't. The mistress has it yet—I caught her readin't no lang since, an' I thocht she wad hae snappit my nose aff; for the mistress, saft-hearted though she is, disna want ye to think sae.

"Weel," continued Jess, "the mistress wrote a kind letter in reply, but whether he ever got it or no I dinna ken, for the neist thing we heard was that his ship had been run doon by a steamer in the middle o' the sea, an' every body in her drooned, but ae man that grippit the neb o' the steamer an' stuck till't like a limpit.

"Ne'er a word did we hear o' Allan after that—four year sin' if it's a day—so what could we think but that he was drooned wi' the lave? And

here he comes in this afternoon, no a lump of a laddie, but a big buirdly man. I canna get owre't."

"A most surprising and affecting occurrence," said Leslie.

"Is it no? But I'm beginnin' to feel faintish for want o' my tea—just sit doon—" but here the parlour bell rang. Leslie answered it.

Mrs. Horn and her nephew were sitting side by side quite composed, and evidently good friends.

"Tell Jess to bring in the tea," said Mrs. Horn, "and an extra cup for Allan;" and when Leslie returned—"This is a young leddy, Allan, Miss Elizabeth Felton—we just ca' her Miss Leslie—wha is so kind as keep an auld woman company. Allan's my nephew, Leslie, so ye may just shake han's, an' mak' up your minds to be frien's, for ye're likely to see a gude deal o' ither."

Allan rose to his feet, and it was not without some blushing on both sides that the young people clasped hands and sat down together at the table.

"Noo, Jess," said Mrs. Horn when that faithful servant came in with the extra cup and the tea-pot, "I ken ye're deein' to hear what Allan has to say for himsel'. Ye havna taen your tea yet, hae ye?"

"No; 'deed I havena, mistress."

"Weel, just put down a cup for yersel', an' he'll tell us a' about it while we're takin' a bite. I'm baith toom and dry."

"I have not very much to tell," said Allan, smiling. "When the *Dolphin* went down another of the crew and I got hold of a mass of wood that had been knocked off the bow, and hung on. It was night, and there was a thick haze on the water as well, but the sea was smooth. We floated about till daybreak, when the air cleared and the wind rose. There was no sail in sight, and we were driven about all day like driftwood at the mercy of the waves. By the afternoon I felt as if I could hold on no longer, but fortunately found some cordage had come away with the wreck. With this I managed to lash myself, as we say, firmly to a spar, and turned to urge on my companion to adopt the same precaution; but he was gone. He had dropped off, and I never saw him again. How I passed the next night I cannot tell. I suppose I lost my senses for hours together; but in the morning, as good luck would have it, a vessel passed so close that I was seen, picked up, and tumbled into a bunk, where I soon came to myself.

"It was an Australian vessel outward bound, and I was landed at Melbourne."

"What way did ye no send word hame then?" asked Jess, who could not drink her tea for listening.

"Well, having written to aunt a year before that, and having got no reply—she wrote, she tells me, but I never got her letter—I thought she had ceased to care anything about me; and there was no one else. I daresay it would be in the public papers."

"I never read newspapers," snapped Mrs. Horn.

"The disaster of the *Dolphin* sickened me of the sea for the time, so I took a spell of work on shore. I got a clerkship in a store at Melbourne, and later chanced on an opportunity of getting up country to a sheep-farm, where I lived a rough life for two years, but saved a little money.

"I was then seized with an uncontrollable longing to get back to the sea, so threw up my situation and re-shipped at Melbourne. I have made two or three voyages since, and am now mate in the *Albatross*, a three-master; but this is the first time I have landed at a Scottish port. Being here, I thought I would look you up, aunt, and see if you still bore me a grudge, or were willing to forget and forgive. It never entered

into my head that I might be taken for my own ghost.—That is all my story, Jess.”

“It looks simple enough when ye hear the way o’t,” said Jess. “An’ I’m sure ye’re sick enough noo o’ bein’ knockit about on the watter.”

“Sick or not,” said Allan, smiling, “I’m off again in a few days.”

“Ye’ll no steer a fit,” said Mrs. Horn. “Na, na, Allan, I’m an auld woman noo, an’ ye maun stay wi’ me till I dee.”

Next morning after breakfast—at which Jess seemed to have insisted there should be something “extra”—Allan said he had some business to transact at the Custom-house.

“Weel,” said his aunt, “ye can leave a note at Nicket & Nailem’s in Queen Street as ye gae by. Ye ken the place, for it was there, it seems, ye learned where I live noo. Write a note, Leslie, sayin’ I want to see Mr. Nicket at once.”

Allan was no sooner gone than Simon Snell came in—it happening to be the day on which his monthly or four-weekly visit was due.

After peering closely at the old lady as usual, he sat down, saying:

“I ken nae differ. Ye look as fresh as ever—in fact, fresher than ye did last month, I doot—that is—I mean—”

"Ye needna mend your words, Seemon," said Mrs. Horn; "an' I think ye needna bother yoursel' to ca' again. Allan's come back."

"Allan?—Allan?"

"Allan Fraser—my nephew, ye ken."

"He—he was drooned."

"So we a' thocht; but it turns oot to hae been a mistake. An' he'll get my siller, ye ken."

"Him—him! and me your cousin?"

"Ay, ye're my faither's sister's son; but he's my ain sister's son; mair nearly related, ye see. Besides, I like him better."

"I dinna count it gude usage, Bell, after a' the trouble I've ta'en."

"Weel, I'll no forget ye a'thegither, Seemon, for nae doot ye're my cousin. I'll leave ye a thoosan' pound, which should pay ye gey weel for the interest ye've ta'en in my health. Ye needna say ocht; it's settled. I've just sent for Nicket to draw up a new will."

"Aweel," said Simon, rising slowly to his feet, "if that's the way o't I needna come back again; a thoosan' poun's no worth the wearyin' on. But," as he moved toward the door, "I'll no keep up an ill feelin', Bell. I'll come to your funeral, an' lay your feet in the grave, as beseems a cousin."

"I'll be glad to see ye, Seemon, if ye dinna dee first. In that case ye needna mind to trouble yoursel'."

Simon did die first. He was found one morning not long thereafter dead in his bed—"heart-disease," the doctor said; but some said "starvation, for all the money he had"—and the thousand pounds he was down for in Mrs. Horn's will reverted to Allan Fraser as residuary legatee.

Allan did not go away again with the *Albatross*. He stayed at home as Mrs. Horn's adopted son and heir.

Lesbie thought, when she knew of the arrangement, that she might not be wanted now; but when she hinted so much Mrs. Horn said:

"Na, na; I canna want ye, Lesbie. Allan's weel enough; but he's no gaun to sit doon an' read Foxe to me, nor play the dam-brod, nor sing a ballad to keep me cheery. There's room for baith o' ye; the hoose is big enough. The twa o' ye maun just mak' up your minds to be frien'ly."

In a very short time she found that the two young people became exceedingly friendly.

"The birkie," she observed of Allan, "likes better to chaff an' laugh wi' that lassoek than wi' me, his ain aunty."



CHAPTER XV.

MR. MUNRO.—CONCLUSION.

AS the pleasant month of May drew to a close Mrs. Felton began to find herself in great difficulties of a pecuniary kind. She had paid her rent—towards which Leslie's first quarterly salary had helped—but that had exhausted her resources, and she had insensibly run a little way into debt for pure necessities. She had only taken from Mr. Tapp what barely cleared the expenses incurred while she had Jack in charge, and Edward's weekly five shillings did not go very far.

Besides, Mr. Tapp had hinted to Ned that he had better look out for another situation. Jack was behaving so well, and doing so much in the shop, that another boy was not required—at least not one so big as Ned. Indeed Jack and his grandfather were getting on so nicely together—through a decided improvement on both sides—

that there seemed little danger of his ever deserting his post again.

"Another thing," said Mr. Tapp to Ned, "this is not a place for you—must go where there is some prospect of getting on," adding in his undertone: "clever, well-educated boy—too good for shop like this—like him, but couldn't keep him."

So the thought of what she was to do with the boy was troubling Mrs. Felton, along with other things, as she walked wearily down to Virginia Street one morning with her bundle of poorly-paid work. And when the girl who took the work from her said there would be no more in the meantime—"trade being slack"—the last straw, as the saying is, seemed to be laid on the camel's back.

She came down into the street with her head in a whirl. She was weak from close work and insufficient nourishment, and as she crossed George Square she felt as if she could not move another step. She looked round for a seat, when all at once her senses seemed to leave her, and she sank in a heap on the pavement.

A gentleman was passing—a black-haired, beetle-browed man of middle age—and stopping, he muttered to himself, "What's this?—what's

this? Is it drink?" and stooping over her, "No, I think not. Some poor woman taken ill," and he raised her to a sitting position. Mrs. Felton had come quickly to herself. "A dizziness in the head," she said weakly. "I think, if you assist me to rise, I could walk on."

He raised her as she requested, and then, seeing her face distinctly, gave a start.

"Jeanie!" he exclaimed, "is this you?"

She now looked at him, and started too.

"Yes, Alec," she said, "it's just me."

"But what!—how!—why do I see you like this? I thought you were—well off—ah!" noticing her dress, "Felton is—is—"

"He died last winter."

"And left you—I see, I see. Why did you not come to me?"

"How could I, Alec?"

"Hoh—how could you not?—your cousin."

"I thought you had taken deadly offence, and—"

"Hoh—nonsense! You could not be my wife, and I went into a passion—but that's all past long ago."

"I think I could walk on now," she said.

"Walk! You sha'n't walk a step;" and hailing an empty cab which was passing along George

Street, he put her in, got her address—which she gave with reluctance—instructed the cabman, and jumped in beside her.

There was little more said till he had assisted her up the two narrow and steep stairs into her own house.

"Now, Jeanie," he said, "tell me all about it."

She told him the little she had to tell.

"And you had nothing saved!" he said. "I thought Felton—"

"Hush! Say nothing against John."

"Not even his life insured?"

"O yes, his life was insured—for a thousand pounds," she said, brightening, as if pleased that she had something good she could tell about her late husband; "but," and her face clouded again, "I did not get it."

"Not get it! Why—how was that?"

He got the truth out of her, sorely against the poor woman's will. At length she showed him the letter she had received from the insurance office.

"And you let it rest there?"

"I never said a word about it to any one!"

"Hoh—that was foolish."

She gave him her reasons as fully as she could find it in her heart to do.

"If you had had any one to look after the matter for you," he said, "it might have been settled without going into any court. Their case is not strong. Give me the letter—they must not be let off that way. And now," rising, "what can I do for you in the meantime?"

"Nothing, Alec—nothing. You are married?"

"No, nor ever will be—a confirmed, old, crusty bachelor."

"I am sorry."

"You needn't; a precious deal better as I am—plenty to do—business extending—getting rich—besides, no wife could have put up with me. By the by, what family have you?"

She told him.

"Eldest boy at work?"

"Yes, but he is losing his situation—not from any fault of his own—and I am at a loss what to do with him!"

"About fifteen! Hum—we might have an opening. Then I can do nothing for you, Jeanie?" taking up a book and pretending to look at it.

"No, Alec, not in the way you mean."

"By by, then, till I see you again," and giving her hand one friendly clasp, he was gone.

Some time afterwards, when she shifted the book he had taken up in his hand and laid down

again, she found a bank-note for five pounds lying beneath it. What could she do but take the help he had so delicately offered?

From the day on which she met her cousin Alexander Munro, Mrs. Felton used in after years to date the upward turn which the affairs of the family took; but really she might have dated it from the day when they resolved to meet their reduced fortunes by reduced expenditure, and to begin in a humble way the honest endeavour to earn their daily bread.

The next bit of good fortune that befell her was the recovery of the greater part of the insurance money. Mr. Munro called again in about a fortnight with the good news. He had been here, and he had been there; he had seen this one, and that one; he had done this and he had done that; he had argued and he had threatened, and used influence, till at last the company had offered to compromise with £750, which offer he had thought it prudent to accept.

"Now, if you will take my advice," he said to Mrs. Felton, "you will put £500 of this in some safe investment which will yield you a fair interest. Suppose you put it into my hands. We can make use of it in our business, and give you five per cent for it. That will give you £25 a

year sure, and the money will be as safe as if it were in the bank. The remaining £250 you should put in a bank, and draw it out as you require it. By the time it is used up your sons will be grown, able to do for themselves, and make you comfortable. What do you think?"

Mrs. Felton agreed to do as he advised, and the advice turned out to have been sound.

"Now about your lad; have you found anything for him yet?"

"Edward? No; but he leaves his place on Saturday."

"I should like to see him."

"You may see him in a few minutes, this is his dinner hour—there—I think I hear him on the stair."

It was Ned. "Hoh!" said Mr. Munro when he came in, "you're old Tapp's boy?" And Ned, looking up, recognized one of the book-dealer's customers, to whose house he had several times gone with books, and from whom he had more than once received a small "tip."

"Yes," said Mrs. Felton, "it is Mr. Tapp he is with."

It was an agreeable surprise to Mr. Munro, for he had been favourably impressed with Ned's smartness, exactness, and intelligent look.

"That's all right," he said; and it was at once arranged that Ned should be taken into the counting-house of the firm on trial.

"Can't give him a large salary at first," said Mr. Munro. "He'll get more, however, than he has been getting, and an advance soon if he does well; large concern now—plenty of room—keep my eye on him."

So Ned said good-bye on Saturday afternoon to Mr. Tapp, Jigger, and Mrs. Flannagan.

"Glad you've got engagement," said Mr. Tapp. "No need of character—never give character." But as Ned was retiring he perked out his head after him and jerked out, "Come if you want one though;" adding in his audible undertone, "best boy ever had—good mother, good son."

"O revore, as they say in the play," said Jigger, "for, mind you, I'm going to keep up acquaintance. I say—saw Midge to-day. He's all right—regular little cherub. He's going abroad when a little bigger—they send them in batches. Had to half-promise to go too—little beggar was crying again."

Jigger, we may as well say here, became a steady as well as an active business man; succeeded to his grandfather's business, and has now a

flourishing book-shop in one of the busiest streets of the city. The name above the door is—but we had better not mention it, as he might not care to be identified with the little scapegrace of seventeen years ago.

“My blessin’ go with ye,” said Norah Flanagan to Ned; “and you had better take them with ye too; I’ve tied them neatly up for you.” It was poor Lal’s story-books. “He said you were to have them. Jigger was to have some, but I don’t suppose he would care for them. And you may as well take them things too; I can’t make anything of them;” and she gave him the odd bits of paper on which Lal had printed his doggerel rhymes. Ned thanked her, and said he would take care of them, which he did. He has them yet, and when he comes across them they recall quaint memories of old times.

Edward entered the counting-house of A. Munro & Co. at fifteen with £20 a year—more than the usual commencing salary, but a point had been stretched in favour of Ned—and he steadily advanced from year to year. He is now, at the age of thirty-two, junior partner in the firm, and able to maintain his mother in easy and even luxurious comfort. He has never married, and

says he will not as long as he has the "old lady" beside him; but his mother says he may marry when he likes, for he has enough and to spare for both wife and mother.

Johnny was by and by transferred from the Normal to the High School; and afterwards it was found possible to send him to the university, where he studied medicine. He wanted to be a doctor, he said; and at the present time he has just commenced practice under the wing of a leading physician, with good prospect of success.

The fall in the family fortunes was sudden and the rise was slow, but it was steady and sure. When we go to visit Mrs. Felton to-day we must direct our steps, not to Talbot Street, —there have been several removals, each to a better habitation, since the family dwelt there— but to Windermere Crescent at the west end of the city. And we shall find that though seventeen or eighteen years have elapsed since we first made her acquaintance, she is still not very old looking; the same quiet and collected manner, the same soft and placid face, only her cheek a little thinner, and her dark hair slightly streaked with silver.

And who are these just alighting from a carriage at the door as we approach—a matronly

lady leading a girl by one hand and a boy by the other, with a portly, ruddy-faced gentleman at her side? Why, that is Leslie, with her two children, and her husband, Mr. Allan Fraser, come to visit "grandmama." Leslie and Allan were married about a year after the memorable day of Allan's "return," with Mrs. Horn's full consent, indeed to her great delight.

"Things couldna hae turned oot better," she said. "Leslie canna rin awa' noo. I'm sure of my bit o' Foxe or Bunyan—I canna bear onybody's voice but Leslie's, and she's ne'er gien a gant since the first day—a game at the dam-brod, an' a Scotch sang, as lang as I leeve."

She lived a few happy years with them, and when she passed away Leslie kept on her pensioners till the old people died out, and the girls got too old for their weekly visit.

The favourite song-book of her old mistress and friend still lies by the side of Leslie's piano and is often in request; but the *Book of Martyrs*, though assigned a special and honourable place in the library, is, we must confess, seldom disturbed in its repose.

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